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NEDL TRANSFER
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TROUBLED WATERS

A NOVEL

Edw E. Jones.

TROUBLED WATERS.

A PROBLEM OF TO-DAY.

BY

BEVERLEY ELLISON WARNER.

Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may, with those self-styled our lords, ally
Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with scale.

The Princess.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.
1885.

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TROUBLED WATERS.

CHAPTER I.

A PARAGRAPH IN THE NEWSPAPERS.

THE *Evening Herald* duly appeared at its usual hour of publication in the late afternoon of a winter's day, and was cried through the streets of a young and populous Eastern city, noted for the number of its factories and the enterprise of its manufacturers.

There was nothing out of the common in this of course, for the *Herald* was a fixture in the daily life of the city, and the solid citizens would be every whit as likely to go home without their hats as without their papers.

On this afternoon of the year of grace in which our story opens there was a paragraph in the local columns of the *Herald* which created from many points of view more attention than the gifted writer who penned it could have deemed possible. Over on the editorial page indeed were paragraphs and whole columns of wise counsel and

suggestion, which the editor hoped and believed were by no means provincial. How far the coming elections were to be influenced by the *Herald's* trenchant remarks and spicy handling of public affairs must remain, like the algebraic symbol, an unknown quantity; but the author of these comments thought no small beer of himself as a moulder of the popular will, and perhaps with full as much reason as his brother quill-drivers of the neighboring metropolis.

Mr. Jack Kincaid penned this paragraph in a more or less cynical frame of mind, the reason of which will presently appear. The paragraph itself was as follows:

"The business of the Tradelawn Mills has more than doubled within the last year. Such prosperity brings not only wealth to the manufacturer, but to the city in which he has his mills. We are pleased to note this increase of business, knowing that it is owing entirely to the energy, prudence, and inventive skill of our fellow-townsman, Mr. Richard Wilton, a self-made man of the times. The special improvements in the machinery used at the Tradelawn Mills are the result of Mr. Wilton's own mechanical genius. Since their application, both in his own and other mills, the better quality of fabric turned out has shut foreign competition entirely from the field.

"Our readers will join with us in congratulating Mr. Wilton upon his substantial success, as evidenced in the elegant mansion which he has recently erected on Monmouth Avenue. The beauty of the exterior, we under-

stand, is even exceeded by the sumptuousness of interior furnishing and decoration.

"At an early date Mr. Wilton will give a reception at his new house, which, we are assured, will be the most gorgeous affair of its kind ever given in the city."

This was a harmless enough paragraph surely; names and localities being altered, we see it again and again. But that Mr. Jack Kincaid spun out his fine reporter's rhetoric without having the least sympathy with it is altogether probable. The fact was that Mr. Wilton had been in the *Herald* office during the morning, skilfully angling for just such a notice, and Mr. Wilton was not only a large advertiser, but had a very heavy bill in the job-printing department, which he settled on the first of every month without a question. It behooved the columns of even an independent and incorruptible journal like the *Herald*, therefore, to be, in an innocent and legitimate manner, influenced by the accounts current in the publishing office.

Mr. Kincaid was in consequence in a somewhat acidulated mood when he wrote the words quoted above.

"It's business, my dear fellow," said old Coddington, a veteran journalist, who sat at the desk opposite Jack, and when not engaged in saturating the air with dense volumes of incense from an ancient meerschaum, was absorbed in the task of forging thunderbolts on various matters of public interest for the editorial columns of the *Herald*.

"It is business, my dear boy."

"Yes, and a great part of it's lies, too."

"Well, charge it upon your conscience to profit and loss if you will, but write him up again when he wants it," was Coddington's answer; from which it will be seen that the veteran journalist was not largely actuated by that moral principle which deprecates the gaining first of this world's goods.

"I wish I could write him down, the vulgar old ass that he is," rejoined the perturbed Mr. Kincaid. "What an idea it is that men cannot wait for public recognition, but must push for it! And of all low and cheap ways in which to get it, this newspaper mention seems about the cheapest and nastiest. What an itch seems to be upon men, and women too, for that matter, to see their names staring at them in print! If this newspaper immortality is all they ever get, it's all they deserve, and that's one comfort."

So Mr. Jack Kincaid read his last proof in which the offensive article was contained, and went away to a late dinner, while Coddington turned anew to the agreeable duty of coloring his meerschaum, and perusing with all a writer's, even a veteran writer's, paternal fondness the paragraphs he had given to the world in that afternoon's paper.

Meanwhile, the boys were crying the *Herald* upon the streets, and the item concerning the prosperity of Richard Wilton was creating a good deal of comment in widely remote circles of society.

The subject of it himself was one of the first, we may

be sure, to carry off a yet damp copy of the paper to his inner office in the Tradelawn Mills, there to peruse it with a coarse pleasure and excitement which the same thing many times repeated had not served to allay.

Richard Wilton was a pure animal. He had grown up from coarse beginnings amid unrefined surroundings. In boyhood he had been flung neck and crop into the factory world, and told by his parents to shift for himself. A few years of public school in one of the lower wards of the city had served only to develop naturally coarse traits, and teach him a smattering of reading and writing with some little arithmetic. His boyhood had been lived in the days before a merciful legislation had been brought to bear upon the subject of the employment of children in the mills, and what little education he had picked up was interjectional.

Richard Wilton, then, the wealthy manufacturer, the owner of half a dozen valuable patents on machinery, was proud of saying that he had "risen from the ranks." He boasted of being a self-made man. From a very tender age he had known what it was to work. He had tasted the bitterness of poverty and had felt the pangs of hunger. Through it all he had been the animal. Pushing and snatching for crusts in the gutter as a child, so his life had been a series of pushes and snatches for whatever came within his reach.

He was now possessed of riches, and rated as a shining example of self-made manhood. The city was proud, in a way, of its self-made citizen. It never occurred to the

city, much less to Richard Wilton himself, that self-made in the cant of the day is often equivalent to half-made. The man of whom the admiring adjective is oftenest used has many times made himself physically at the expense of himself mentally and spiritually. There is a wide difference between the man who really makes himself and the man who merely makes money.

Mr. Richard Wilton, as he stands before the fire in his little private office, back of and leading from the large offices in the main building of the Tradelawn Mills, is a type of the man who merely makes money. Being such an one, he reads and re-reads the paragraph from the versatile pen of Mr. Kincaid, feeling certain that it is an unreserved tribute to his energy and enterprise. As he read the animal came to the surface, and peeped through the thin veneer which wealth, and the public recognition which more or less accompanies wealth, encrusts the natural man.

It was almost a revengeful light that played in his heavy, lead-colored eyes.

"They can't say too much for me now," he muttered. "I'm self-made, I am, equal to the best of 'em. Even this writing feller, he says I'm an honor to the city. He can't help himself. I am. Don't I employ more help than any on 'em? Don't I pay bigger bills? Haven't I a bigger house, that cost more money than any house in the city? Haven't I silver dishes to eat out of? Haven't I hosses with gold-plated harness, an' a coachman togged out with the nobbiest? Ain't my house an' my turn-

outs a dashed sight bigger an' shinier than that young Worthington's even, an' he won't speak to me scarce? Won't he, though?" Here the animal played again upon the surface. "I'll make him. He hasn't half the money I have. I'll show him. I'll show everybody. I'm a self-made man, curse 'em, an' they've got to come to it."

Here he read the paragraph again, and forgot his ferocity in a swelling vanity that ended in calling his chief clerk to his office and making him ostentatiously a present of the evening paper.

Mr. Thomas Street was not unaffected by this paragraph, which he indeed had been the active instrument of bringing before the public. Tom was a compositor in the office of the *Herald*, and had embalmed in cold type the item which had bestowed upon Richard Wilton an ephemeral patent of nobility.

Tom Street was a ne'er-do-well of many attempts. He was the husband of a patient wife, and the father of a reasonably large and constantly-increasing family. In business for himself he had never prospered, but far from being dismayed or discouraged, no one ever drew more cheerfully or with such implicit confidence on the bank of the future as did Mr. Street. His cheerfulness seemed to increase in the proportion that the shine on his coat-sleeve grew more lustrous. Not that Tom ever did anything himself to warrant this draft of confidence upon the future. Banish the thought! That was not his way. Tom's eyes were fixed upon a future windfall, and by

long practice he had grown to wait for it philosophically. At one time Tom's hopes had been based on the presumptive action of a rich uncle, from whom he had vague expectations of wealth. He was very solicitous for his uncle during the last, sad illness, and between the day of the funeral and the publication of the will he was tenderly careful of the bereaved widow. "But would you believe it," he said, almost exultingly, as though proud of a new discovery concerning humanity,—"would you believe it, Mr. Kincaid, the old frump never left me a cent? Not a darned cent." Tom grew mildly, but firmly, profane on these trying occasions. Then his uncle's wife, who had once "patted my youngest on the head, sir, and asked the color of her eyes, quite like one of the family. She died, by gad, and never so much as indicated by a stroke of her pen that she remembered I had a child."

This was hard, of course, but Mr. Street's temperament enabled him to bear up wonderfully. His sorrow, he explained to the sympathetic ear of Jack Kincaid, was not so much on account of the contumacy of disposition of his relatives, this failure, so to speak, to recognize the worth and necessities of a devoted nephew, as for fear that they had been unjustly influenced against him "by people, sir, who will not suffer a man to prosper beyond a certain limit. They have followed me all my life, sir, people who have envied me my chances, and have always succeeded in thwarting them."

It is to be hoped that Mr. Street believed all this

himself, for certainly Mr. Kincaid had doubts upon the subject.

On the day of the Wilton paragraph the patient editor had been made the recipient of another sacred confidence.

"I have a distant cousin who has no children, and no family connections but myself. I have five children, and, in the order of a bountiful nature and by permission of a kind Providence, more coming. My cousin is fading away, slowly but surely fading from earth, sir; now do you think it conceivable that the claims of any mere orphan asylum can discount my chances of my cousin's money? Do you think it, sir?"

"Not from point of numbers, certainly," responded Jack, with a levity which Tom thought ill-suited to the occasion.

"No, sir!" he continued, somewhat loftily, "unless people who are hostile to me, and who have pursued my family unrelentingly for years, come in now to disturb my chances, my children at least will be decently provided for." So Tom, when he had passed the time of hoping any increase of fortune to himself, began to teach the gospel of windfall to his children.

Such a paragraph as that referring to Richard Wilton's constantly-increasing wealth was like fuel to the flame of Tom's passionate disease. He even handled the type-metal more reverently that spelled such words as luxury and grandeur and wealth. He dwelt pensively upon the line hinting of the interior beauties of the mill-owner's

mansion, and while the foreman was impatiently waiting for the result of Tom's work, that worthy was mentally engaged in "setting up" a flaming notice of the "sudden accession to wealth of our well-known fellow-townsman, Mr. Thomas Street, formerly connected with that prosperous journal, the *Evening Herald.*"

Tom's adjectives were a little more sonorous than usual that evening, as he gathered his numerous brood about him; the children were a little more mystified, and the wife a little more patient.

Robert Croft read the same paragraph, dwelling particularly on that part which spoke of the more than double increase of wealth, for Robert Croft had been employed in the Tradelawn Mills something like twenty years, long before Richard Wilton had succeeded to the ownership.

Croft came home this evening with one of the clerks of the mills, John Sherwood by name, and together they fell to talking of the paragraph which the latter had been allowed to read by the generous officiousness of his office chief.

"We ought to be interested in that, Robert," said Sherwood, laughingly, as he linked arms with the sturdy foreman, black-haired, black-eyed, swart-faced, presenting a strong contrast to the pure Northman blue eyes and tawny mane of the younger man.

Robert Croft's face changed shadows, it never seemed really to lighten, as he answered, grimly,—

"Yes, John, it ought, but I question if it does."

"How now, old growler! You're one of these dangerous fellows who have read political economy. You ought to rejoice in the prosperity of capital; doesn't it mean the equal prosperity of labor?"

"They tell us it does, I know, John, but look there!" The two men halted as Croft pointed off towards the western outskirts of the city, where the land rose in a low eminence, and they saw the towers and windows of Richard Wilton's new house glittering with lights, made necessary by the fast closing twilight.

"That was not there a year ago. You and I and six or seven hundred others have been building it for the last twelve months. Now, look here!" There was a savagery in his tone to which Sherwood had not been accustomed, and from which he almost shrank, but that he knew the nature of the man, how sweet and sound it was. Croft pointed to a little story and a half cottage a few yards off the side street in which they were standing. The cottage had evidently been built for years, and before the two tall brick tenement-houses which crowded it painfully on either side. It was not very attractive in itself, and was in the midst of a neighborhood where misery seemed to have established a training-school. The evening breeze, what little forced its way into these narrow quarters, came tainted with its passage over garbage-heaps. The smell of ill-cooked food added an element of disgust. It was not a hopeful scene.

"Look here," repeated Croft, after giving time for his companion to take in the full meaning of his surround-

ings. "There is no change in my house or my circumstances from a year ago. I have not been able to add even so much as a cup to my household things. Every working hour I have been helping, with hundreds of others, to increase the already enormous wealth of our employer. It has so grown upon him by our labor, that he puts in gold on his carriage harness what would keep my family in food and clothes for months. Am I any the better off? They say that increased wealth means better times for the workingman. In God's name how do they make it out? Our wages are not increased. They are actually lessened as the number of applicants for work grows. Are our hours of work shortened? You know well they are not. Are our homes made more comfortable, or where Richard Wilton owns them, does he take a trifle off the rent as the money rolls into his safe? Not very much! You know that the first money that comes out of your pay, before you handle a penny of it yourself, is for the rent. Do we have even the hope of better things? Does this increased prosperity which we help to bring about, without whom it would not be brought about, does it hold out a chance for us in the future? Even this is denied us, and the root of bitterness that lies at the bottom of all our strikes and abortive labor movements is, not that other men prosper, but that they give us no chance of an additional cupful now and then from the very reservoir which we erect and fill."

Croft's face was set and stern. The softness of humanity seemed to have been overlaid by something

certainly not from within. It was an accretion from without, of years of toil and repressed bitterness, and sense of wrong, which now for almost the first time he had allowed to escape his lips.

He shook himself free from the touch of John Sherwood and stalked moodily to the cottage door.

The newspaper paragraph seemed to have a fine faculty for stirring up people on this winter's evening; for as Sherwood turned away to go to his own destination on the other side of the city he felt a hand upon his shoulder and a voice,—

"Ah, John, going my way?"

It was young Mr. Winthrop, "the parson" of a little chapel which he had built mainly of his own means in this society- and church-shunned portion of the city. Mark Winthrop was what is called a "tearing ritualist." He did a woman's work in maundering away among poor and sick people, when he might have flourished his handkerchief as assistant at St. Jude's, and been buried in slippers and cigar-cases. It was darkly hinted that he maintained a confessional, and it was known for a fact that he burned candles on the altar of St. Mary's Chapel, and was fond of such vain things as flowers and early services.

John Sherwood was one of the men who put up with these monstrous absurdities, and even joined in them, for the sake of the good work which it was grudgingly admitted was somehow accomplished by means of the gayly decorated little chapel.

"Think of it, John," said Winthrop; "of the thousands of dollars spent by Mr. Wilton every year in show and living expenses. Here is the paper to-night speaking of his having doubled his business in the past year. Why can't some good angel whisper to him what a Christmas gift it would be to share some of this overplus about here?" And he waved his hand over towards the squalid neighborhood which they were now leaving behind them.

"And yet"—more cheerfully—"of course the more work his mills turn out the better for his workmen. The more they do the better off they are. Yet there does seem a hitch somewhere. Scale does not exactly balance with scale, does it, John? What is the secret?"

"Ask Robert Croft, sir," was all that Sherwood answered; and the two separated, John to his quiet boarding-place with the Widow Lane, and Mark Winthrop to his study, where he burned late lights, conning the Early Fathers, and wondering at the difference between them and their later sons. To-night the magical paragraph in the *Evening Herald* fascinated him more than his Latin tomes, and he found himself reading it again and again until he retired. All night long before him flew visions of huge Christmas-trees laden to the tiniest spray, and over all, as the unwilling presiding genius, floated uneasily the short, corpulent figure of Richard Wilton, pierced through and through with a thousand spindles of his own woollen-mills.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROGRESS OF THE PARAGRAPH.

As Robert Croft crossed the few square feet before his cottage door, by courtesy and the children termed "a yard," the shadows on his face changed again. The ferocity and bitterness were gone, and in their place a look of quiet endurance.

"Oh, you're there, are you? Late again, 's usual. The supper's all burned up. What made you late? That good-for-nothin' fellow Sherwood, I'll warrant." These were the words that greeted the tired workman, as he entered the door and crossed to the plain supper-table, to empty out the contents of his tin pail before hanging it up, ready for early duty the next morning.

"Yes; he walked home with me, and we stood talking on the corner a bit," said Croft, as one speaks when tired, and as though to fill in his place in the dialogue, not expecting that anything he can say can be of any possible use or produce any possible effect. It is the fate of some people thus to play in modern life a part like the chorus of the old Greek plays, of no importance save as punctuation-marks and foils for the leading *dramatis personæ*. Croft played chorus to his wife, as many a better man has done, for sake of the peace that came with keep-

ing to a subordinate place. Mrs. Croft was not consciously a virago. She had been brought up to a better position in life than she now occupied, and had married Croft when he and every one else supposed that he was bound to rise from the rank of employé to that of employer. That was twenty years ago, and young Croft was young no longer. Straitened means and the necessity of small economies had told hardly upon the disposition of Mrs. Croft; and as the years slipped away without any visible improvement in her husband's affairs, she gradually worked herself into the belief that Croft had abused her by marrying her, and that upon his head lay the responsibility of the little twelve-by-fourteen cottage in a filthy and noisy neighborhood.

Robert never complained. Perhaps he felt self-accused. He had married Ellen Howe out of a comfortable if not luxurious home, and had brought her to this. Perhaps it was his fault. But was it all his? Had others nothing to do with his present state, after more than twenty years of faithful service? Croft thought bitterly of the paragraph again, as he seated himself without another word at the little square pine table, where the supper, consisting of tea, bread, and potatoes, was spread. The tea had steeped bitter and the potatoes were roasted hard; but this being his own fault, as he humbly acknowledged to himself, he choked down the unsatisfactory meal.

Mr. Richard Wilton was at the same moment cursing the butler because the sweetbreads were underdone, and

threatening the tortures of the condemned upon stupidity that brought champagne in at the wrong stage of the dinner's progress.

Croft dragged through his evening meal, as he had done every night for years, mechanically, not hoping now, as he once had, that these mean surroundings would give way eventually to better; not even wondering of late, as he had formerly, how it was all to end. To-night the paragraph haunted him. He even broke over at last the habit of years, and introduced a new subject of conversation.

"Wilton's house is finished and furnished, Ellen," he said, "and the papers say he is going to open it soon with a great reception. Who'd have thought it years ago when he was as bad a workman as I had in the shop, before the war broke out, and he went with poor Jim Lane's company?"

"You'd better say who'd have thought you'd 'a been only a machine-shop foreman after twenty years, while such a fellow as Richard Wilton got to the top? And whose fault is it, I'd like to know?" Robert saw that his effort at diverting the conversation had not been over and above successful, and relapsed, half unconsciously repeating, "I'd like to know."

"A reception! umph! Dick Wilton giving a party!" The new subject was too painfully suggestive of Mrs. Croft's perennial grievance to be quietly dropped. "While we're only able to scrape along just, and keep out o' debt, he's throwing away money by the cartload,

money that you've helped to earn. Whose fault is it, I'd like to know?" This periodical return to a sore point seemed not to touch Robert Croft, as he pushed back from the table and filled his pipe, preparative to the single hour's enjoyment of the whole day.

"There you go with your everlasting pipe, taking your ease while I have to work like a slave from morning until night. I don't get time to waste on pipes, nor money for that matter."

Robert silently assented to the facts as stated—he had heard them quoted before—by pressing in the tobacco of his pipe a little more vigorously and making for the door.

At the moment he laid his hand upon the knob, it was twisted from his grasp on the outside, and the remaining member of this happy family entered with a careless ease that betokened either fearlessness of her reception or a sullen hardness that was well used to not over-gentle treatment, and another visitation more or less would make comparatively little difference.

Ellen Croft was the only child, and Croft, without ever acknowledging the fact in so many words, even to himself, was negatively thankful that no more lives had been brought into the world by his agency, and, so to speak, on his responsibility.

"Hello, pa!" cried the girl, tall for her sixteen years, with the burning black eyes and dark face of her father, throwing down with the greeting a japanned lunch-box, and seating herself at a corner of the table where a plate

with knife and fork unused denoted that she was expected.

"Well, now, ma, don't you nag! I came home just as soon as I could from the mill, and I only went round with Jennie by Mr. Wilton's house. It's an elegant thing, and I wanted to see it, an' I did, so there!"

There was a haste on the girl's part to get in her whole case before allowing the angry woman to break out as she did now.

"You're at it again, too, Ellen Croft. What's Richard Wilton's fine house to you and such as you? You'll never see the inside of it. Your father's just where *he* was in the machine-shop twenty years ago, when Dick Wilton hadn't a penny. Just you learn to tend to your work and stay to home the rest o' the time. The Lord knows what'll become of you with your Jennies and Minnies, and your story-papers, and your street-walking. People look down on us enough now, what with your father creeping along every day to the shop instead of ridin' in his carriage. Don't you go and make reason to say anything worse of us, mind that! for when you do, miss, out that door you go, and into it you don't come again."

Mrs. Croft's faded eyes flashed, and there was an added twist given to the soiled dishes as she tumbled them into the pan ready for washing. Croft went out the door silently with almost a sympathetic nod to his daughter, accompanied by a half-warning shake of the head. Ellen mumbled the bread and potatoes that were

left to her share in suppressed wrath. This black-eyed girl had many of the finer traits of her father, but her bending before the daily blasts of the maternal tongue was simply sullenness, while his was patience and resignation.

There were not many moments of the rare intervals when this girl was within sound of her mother's voice that she did not hear some bitter or spiteful allusion to her chosen companions and her own carelessness of conduct. Truth to tell, her friends and amusements were of the kind to draw criticism and disparagement from a less censorious guide than her mother.

Jennie and Minnie were the diminutives of Jane and Martha, two girl acquaintances who had discarded these homely names from an idea that their respective sponsors in baptism had no fine modern sense of the fitness of things. Ellen was called Nellie by her intimates for the same reason. They had explored literature, these hard-working mill-girls, literature that is as embodied and illustrated in the *Young Ladies' Weekly Banner;* and in all the number of thrilling episodes that crowded the *Banner* columns, not one heroine could be found to bear so commonplace a name as Ellen. Mill-life, even for mill-girls, has its ideal and romantic side. A certain class, of which "Nellie" and her friends are the type, never look upon the humdrum daily work as a profession which they are to learn thoroughly, and by which they are to earn their livelihood. Far be such a thought from the readers of the *Young Ladies' Banner.* Mill-

work is only an occupation by the way. Marriage is the end of life. Anything that can bring this about is the one thing altogether lovely and to be desired; no chance must be lost. And small blame to the girls say I. They go to their morning work in gorgeous toilets, they wear their hair banged or frizzed, they carry lunch-boxes and baskets thinking scorn of a plebeian tin pail; so that by no inadvertence of theirs shall the ever-coming husband pass them by.

Small blame to them, I say again.

They have been brought up, so far as it may be said that they have been brought up at all, to believe that an early marriage is the cure-all for life's multitudinous ills; that a husband is the *summum bonum*. Matrimony they are taught, and not work, is the true heritage of women. What toiling mother, the main support of a lazy, drunken, or shiftless husband (and the family which he has bestowed upon her), but that dreams ever of marriage for her daughters? Dreams, did I say? plots and plans for it, injecting the idea with the maternal milk, and nursing it on many a hint and suggestion, as the girl takes the form and grows into the maturity of womanhood.

It is one of the social problems our wise men ought to puzzle their brains over, how to prepare young women for wifehood without making it seem the chief end of their lives.

Some of us who have looked into the matter a little think that a solution will be nearer when girls are taught

to go about their work as boys are, with the idea that it is life-work, and therefore to be thoroughly mastered, not as something to tide over the waiting years between a girl's entrance upon the matrimonial market and her sale for final delivery from the criss-crosses of dependence to the ease and freedom of married life.

The preacher preaches to the butterflies in the parlor, here, as well as to the bees in the mill and factory.

Small blame to Jennie and Minnie and Nellie that they imbibed such social science from the weekly story-papers, and slighted their work in proportion to not putting their whole heart in it. Small blame to Ellen Croft, brought up as she was with no tender counsel at home, no help or direction for the future save a significant hint now and then to get married and be off, if she could find some big enough fool, that she changed her individuality to that of Nellie, who shirked her work to read sensational stories and walked the street with a pair like herself, flirting boldly and brazenly with men, who do not as a usual thing marry their wives from the pavement.

Nellie thought little blame of herself at all events, and on this evening, after a grudging half-hour over the dish-pan, during the course of which her mother snarled out some truths that tingled the more for being so true, she slipped on an imitation fur cloak and was off to meet Jennie as usual.

Mrs. Croft did not know that she had left the house until she was beyond call. Then she settled down to sew

viciously, and to store up a welcome for the members of her family when they should return.

Tired with waiting and with work, the woman dropped off at last to sleep in her chair, and when at a late hour Robert Croft came home, it was to find, with some real pang of surprised emotion, that the hard lines across the stern features were somewhat softened over the closed eyes. He sighed before he waked her up, as he heard her murmur in her sleep, "Whose fault is it?" thinking sadly how often he had tried to answer the question for himself. They went off to bed, not comfortably, but enduring, as they had learned they must.

It was midnight when Ellen came in with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, and whispered assurances to her companions at the door that she had had an elegant time. Very softly she crept up-stairs, for the hour *was* a little late even, she thought, for a girl to come into her father's house at night.

CHAPTER III.

MR. STREET EMERGES FROM PRIVATE LIFE, AND THE PARAGRAPH IS STILL UNDER DISCUSSION.

BEAUTIFUL was the sight of Thomas Street, having cleansed himself so far as possible from professional stains, seated at the tea-table, as it were, in the bosom of his family. Five happy children graced the somewhat meagre board, and Mrs. Tom was still on the pleasant side of forty.

Two or three evenings after that one of which enough has already been said, Thomas was in the particularly hilarious mood which always preceded meetings of the Royal Sons of Toil, of which our friend was at present the Royal Paternal Toiler. It was to five pairs of greedy ears, and under the inspiration of five pairs of wide-open eyes, that Tom discoursed this evening concerning the dark and bloody secrets of the Sons of Toil.

"Secrets, my children, which under pain of dreadful penalties I could not even breathe to you."

The children hereupon gasped in concert, and Mrs. Street, a pale-faced, weary-eyed, yet not uncomely woman, smiled over the battered teapot.

Tom's wife had grown past her day of sentiment.

She possessed a little sum of money, which she had prudently invested in government bonds, drawing therefrom a modest income, which had served to tide over the many lapses in Tom's attempts at wrestling with the problem of life,—those lapses which he was firmly convinced were occasioned by the world's coldness and desire to keep him down. In spite, therefore, of Tom's, at times, indignant and pathetic protests, Mrs. Tom held on to her bonds. The Royal Paternal Toiler felt ill-used, in a measure, at this seeming lack of confidence in his financial capabilities, but never reproached his patient wife beyond railing at the world in general, and reading passages of Byron to his children with a savage pathos all his own. The admiring older children wondered, the youngsters generally howled, especially at the loud words and emphatic gestures. The mother smiled on, half happy, if not wholly content. She had her bitter moments too, but she had that infinite capacity of many women for absorbing pain and trouble and disappointments, and growing the stronger to endure. She fully recognized that she, and not Tom, was the stronger vessel, and that it was necessary for her to "keep up" for Tom and the children's sake. She was just the wife for Tom, although it was not quite fair to her that the reverse of the proposition should not hold true.

Once she said to Sydney Worthington, who had been a favorite pupil in the early, prosperous days of school-keeping, before Tom came wooing,—

"I married Tom for better or for worse. I meant it

then. I mean it now. If that service means anything at all, it means that nothing but an absolute breaking of the marriage vow can separate Tom and me. If it seems worse sometimes now than it did a dozen years ago, why, that was something to have taken into account a dozen years ago."

"Of course," said Sydney Worthington, who had very high ideas of the marriage vow, and also believed implicitly in married people keeping their troubles to themselves. But then Sydney was all of fifteen years, and quite five whole babies, behind Tom Street's wife.

"And speaking of secrets, my dear," said Tom, from the circle of youthful scions of the house of Street, "what an uncommonly sly dog that Richard Wilton was, with his inventions that no one suspected him of. Richard gives a great party soon, in honor of the completion of his noble mansion." Tom dwelt upon a luxury of words, as in some measure atoning for the absence of that for which they stood.

"Do you expect to be invited, Tom?" asked Mrs. Street, mischievously.

"The question should be put in a somewhat different manner to convey a correct impression of the circumstances, Mrs. Street," answered the Paternal Toiler, with some dignity of rebuke in his tones. "Does Mr. Richard Wilton expect me to rejoice with him on that auspicious occasion? is a much more suitable way of referring to the possibilities of the event. No; I do not much think he does," he added, gravely, as though

having weighed all the chances for and against with judicial severity.

"Richard Wilton and I belong to two different worlds, my dear," in a tone conveying the impression that his own world was to be preferred as a dwelling-place.

Tom, junior, and Sarah, the eldest girl, fully believed this, and Mrs. Street said nothing to disturb the harmony of the occasion. So Tom continued, waving his hands grandly, and stumbling occasionally over a particularly unctuous word.

"Richard Wilton lives in the world of money; I do not." A half-sigh from Mrs. Street checked the flow of Tom's oration for a moment, but only for a moment.

"I live in an atmosphere pregnant with the great thoughts of the great men of all ages. A follower of the noble profession of Gutenberg, to say nothing of our later though not less noble Franklin, can afford to despise that grovelling life which feeds on reports from the stock market; whose pulse rises and falls, so to speak, with the fluctuations of commerce. Your father, my dears, is a man of letters,—remember that,—a man who has had his ambitions, which a hostile world has found it politic to blight from time to time; but a man of letters is above the sordid plane of thought that looks upon pecuniary ease as the highest of all earthly aspirations. Learn to have a noble scorn of money, my children. You will then be all the more able to enjoy the luxury of wealth when, in the time to come, it will be

yours. You have a future before you, my dears,"—here the eyes opened a little wider,—"a future prospect of refined and cultured ease. Our dear Cousin Eliza is going from us, I fear, Patty; nothing but an unforeseen orphan asylum, I am convinced, stands between these simply-clad children and untold wealth,—untold wealth, by all accounts. Never seek riches, my children,"—detecting himself in a breach of consistency in this prophecy of windfall with his former noble sentiments,—"but when it comes, as come it will, be ready for it, as your father has always been. Now, Sarah, you trundle these little ones off to bed. Tom, junior, get my hat. The claims of public office must be met, and to-night I must sink the private citizen. Come, scatter, younkers!" to the olive-plants who lingered intoxicated by the eloquence of their paternal relative, and hoping for more as an alternative to going to bed. The brood reluctantly dispersed under the careful herding of the mature Sarah, who was much like her mother, plus a childlike confidence in her father's adjectives. Mrs. Tom gave the well-worn soft hat an extra brush, and the Royal Paternal Toiler issued from the dingy house, in one-half of which he lived, the rent being always secured by the half-yearly return from Mrs. Tom's bonds. Tom did not go without kissing his wife in the patronizing fashion of a public man who stoops occasionally from the lofty heights of great national interests to such minor matters as the cementing of domestic affairs.

Mrs. Street, having seen the children off to bed, sat

down to the homely but useful occupation of darning stockings. It was not at all an inspiring or romantic employment, but out of that stocking-basket the little woman extracted some of her happiest hours. Mrs. Tom fed daily on loyalty to daily duty. Some humdrum creatures can do this and not starve much. Some do starve upon it and feel the pangs. Mrs. Tom never asked herself whether she starved or not. It is a blessed thing to be able to lose sight of the world at times, even though one goes no farther than the bottom of a stocking-basket.

Meanwhile, Mr. Thomas Street walked away towards the lodge-room of the Sons of Toil, which presently he reached, and, after giving the magniloquent password, entered with a look of composed gravity, which, however little it harmonized with his chubby face and below medium stature, eminently became the office of Royal Paternal Toiler, to which the suffrages of his fellow-members and some little political wire-pulling of his own had exalted him.

It is the delight of patriotic orators to hurl proud language of a boastful and defiant sort at the effete aristocracies of the old-world civilizations. Mere titles we as a people scorn. The privileges which go with titles we denounce. We have no class distinctions, of course, in this republic, being all freemen, and, remembering that rank is but the guinea's stamp, still there seems to be a vagrant longing for nominal and titular distinction in the hearts of all sorts and conditions of us. Something

approaching a passion for the glory of rank without its responsibilities may be seen perhaps in the many societies with grandiloquent names with which the country is flooded. Most of them are mutual benefit organizations, ranging in purpose from insurance against death all the way down to associations for house-building and even for marrying happily. The commonplaceness of the object is hidden under the grandeur of the name. The Most Estimable Knights of the Woollen Fleece, the Eternal Brethren of Solemn Mystery, the Dignified Sons of Refined Wisdom, these and a hundred others of like noble nomenclature jostle each other in an effort to supply the hunger for titles which as mere hereditary baubles we rightly despise.

The Royal Sons of Toil was a society of this class. It was a sick and burial brotherhood, providing a certain sum weekly for brethren out of employment on account of sickness, and promising decent burial when one's time came. In its way it was a good enough institution. Most of its members were laboring men, mechanics, small storekeepers, and young clerks, who found it a jolly enough way to occupy part of the time that is the curse of so many young fellows, whose only homes are the stale boarding-houses of the city. Twice a month they left the lowly paths in which they walked, contentedly enough, according to their lights, and flourished in gorgeous regalia, paying huge deference to each other as Most Noble Sons of Toil. Occasionally there was a day of picnic, when the Sons of Toil and their

respective families went down the harbor in a barge with a band of music. Much beer and many sandwiches were consumed at these festal scenes. The Noble Toilers threw aside their dignity for the day, and consented to serve ice-cream to the women-folk and to swing the babies. The Royal Son who acted as secretary (under a much more noble name, however) took care that such excursions received due mention in the newspapers, and the notices were cut out and pasted in the Lodge scrap-book. The Royal Sons of Toil were not politically inclined, nor were they a trades-union. The constitution outlined membership to include "all white men who were wrestling with the problem of life in some form of professional, mechanical, or manual toil." So it came to pass the Royal Paternal Toiler, Brother Thomas Street, grasped on this evening with the intricate and peculiar grip of the Toilers Brother John Sherwood and Brother Robert Croft, and with less fervor, but stern impartiality, the grimy palms of Brother Job Waters, a longshoreman, and Brother Samuel Hall, a stoker in the Tradelawn Mills.

"The Brethren of the Royal Sons of Toil will adjust themselves, and silence reign until it shall be found that no intruders are in our midst," cried Brother Street, in rich enjoyment of the rôle he played. And here we must drop the curtain. Far be it from us to disclose those tremendous secrets which (in addition to the sick and burial benefits) bound the Sons of Toil together. It is not until the ritual has been duly worked, and the

Toilers are gathered about a long table discussing the quality of a mighty chowder, and wafting the incense of tobacco upwards as an act of worship to the goddess of social recreation, that we are permitted to peep in upon them, and to listen to their conversation.

Naturally, among Sons of Toil the tenor of their remarks had to do with labor. Croft and Sherwood had been talking together, when a word dropped by one of them caught the ear of Mr. Street.

"Yes," he said, "business is better than it has been. The mighty forces of labor and capital are jointly producing to a hitherto unprecedented extent. Your Tradelawn Mills, for instance, have more than doubled orders lately. The Sons of Toil are wresting from the raw material such finished products as never before. Labor is king. What would the Tradelawn Mills be without you, Croft, or you, Sherwood, or you, Hall? What would the increasing commerce of this port be without you and your brethren, Waters? What——" Here he was interrupted. He was intending to remark with all modesty what would the *Evening Herald* establishment be without him and the others of the composing-room? but Hall brutally cut him short.

"It's all blamed nice, this talk about what they would do without us; they seem to get along well enough without our help when it comes to spendin' the money."

"What would you have?" said Sherwood. "Don't it seem a good deal of poppycock talk, this cant about sharing equally? Who builds the mills? who pays for

the machinery? who furnishes the money for the raw stuff that we work up? Who buys the cargoes and builds the ships that you unload, Waters?"

The longshoreman growled, unable at the moment to respond, but Croft was readier.

"Who does?" he cried. "Why, we do; who else? Where does the money come from but the ground? Who digs it up out of the mines and in the wheat-fields but men like us, who wet it with the sweat of their brows before it passes into the hands of men like Wilton. Why, we fools of workingmen first create wealth, then we hand it over to people we call capitalists, who deal out to us just enough to keep us from starving, while we keep adding to their pile. Capital! There would have been no capital in the first place without labor, and having made it, we get down on our knees and beg to be allowed to increase it, so that we may keep bread in the mouths of our families."

"Certainly no proposition accords so closely with the facts of modern life as that the rich are growing richer, and the poor poorer, every year," thus solemnly spoke Thomas Street.

"Well, what are we going to do about it, Croft?" asked Sherwood. "Admit every fact you have stated. There is capital and there is labor. Can either one get along without the other? if so, which can do it best?"

"Give us a chance," said one of the Sons of Toil, an employé of Wilton. "Give us a chance to do better for ourselves, that's what we want."

"That's what we're goin' to have, too!"

"Force 'em, blast 'em!"

"Make 'em pay more wages!"

"Tell 'em we'll leave their houses if they don't let up on the rent," this being intended for facetiousness.

A confused murmur of voices arose, in which it was hard to distinguish anything save a savagery of expression against employers, half forced, half sincere.

Tom Street deemed it his duty to pour oil upon the troubled waters, being, as it were, officially responsible for the welfare of the chowder-plates and tobacco-pipes which were hired for the occasion.

"Brethren," he said, rising, "it is a matter of deep regret to me that upon an occasion of social——"

"Oh, blow out his gas!"

"Sit down, Tommy dear!"

This was discouraging, and, in point of fact, rude; but the chorus of protest against any oration, long or short, in the well-known prose of the Royal Paternal Toiler was too strong to be resisted, and the unappreciated peacemaker sat down perspiring.

"One thing's certain," continued one of the men, after the quenching of Mr. Street's remarks, "the way the Tradelawn Mills is managed now means reform or a strike."

This met a hum of approval, and the speaker, who was Hall, the stoker, went on: "P'raps we ain't got no chance to pull for higher pay, but we've got a fighting chance to hang on to what we have. I swear to thunder,

I get a dollar 'n a quarter a day for shovelling coal into blasted hot furnaces, six days in the week, and banking up the fires for Sunday. How's a man, with three younkers an' a missis', to do more 'n live on that, and in debt all the time, too? Live! I couldn't live on it. My little gal has to go into the mill to work when she ought to be in school; work almost as hard as I do for fifty cents a day, so that the rent can be paid. It 'ud be a durned shame if he couldn't have my little gal make a slave of herself, so th't he could have another gold buckle on his horses."

Whether this man had any real affection for his child may, of course, be doubted. He was big and brawny, and most of the time disreputably dirty; but it is alleged by weak-minded men like the Reverend Mark Winthrop, who have so little manly, practical spirit as to potter around tenement-houses six days in the week, that even fellows like Hall have the domestic virtues.

Croft did not question the stoker as to the reality of his grievance, but he burst out, angrily, "That's another bite off the same piece. They force us to turn our children into cattle. It's either that or starve. Where's the justice of it? Where's the policy of it? They don't give us time to train our children by education so that they can do better work. They snatch at them before they know anything of the outside world, and bring them up in a devilish atmosphere of grind, grind, grind, so that *they* may spend."

"That's in our own hands, though," interrupted Sher-

wood. "We're not forced to send children into the mills."

"Is it, though?" laughed Croft, scornfully. "Ask Bennet there if it is. He has a dollar forty a day, and six children to bring up. He pays eleven dollars a month rent, and pays it to Richard Wilton before he sees the color of his own money himself. What would he do if three of his girls didn't work like dogs to bring in somethin' else? What can he do but turn his other brats into the mill as soon as they can do a day's work for fifty cents? He's not forced, isn't he?" Croft sneered, contemptuously. "You talk like one of the mill-owners or their fine lady wives, who never have to square day wages with the day's accounts. In our own hands! Oh, yes, if we don't mind taking help from the town. It's all wrong, cruelly wrong, I say."

Croft did not speak for applause, but the clapping of rough hands that followed this outburst gratified him with the feeling that he was the spokesman of more than his own feelings.

Sherwood said nothing in rejoinder. He was as conscious as any of them that something was wrong, that the problem of labor was an unsolved problem as yet, unsolved certainly to the satisfaction of the most important factor of it,—the laboring man himself. But he saw, too, that there was a fatal absurdity in the way these men were discussing it. He saw that capital had a reasonable side to turn to labor, that it was folly to claim all employers were in the wrong and all employés in the right.

He felt sure that no good could come from such heated and unreasonable discussion, and had a feeling of shame for Croft that he had been betrayed into the manner of men like Hall and Waters.

The talk went on in much the same strain, Croft saying little more, Sherwood nothing at all, and Tom Street bursting to philosophize, but wisely refraining from casting the pearls of his rhetorical thought before these men, who seemed bound to lift themselves no higher than the level of wages and work.

The band broke up finally and separated for the night. Some of them were chronic malcontents, who found their daily food in such talk, and were little influenced beyond the point they had long before reached. Many of them were men who went home with a bee of discontent buzzing in their minds which had never found lodgment previous to this talk. Rooms looked smaller to them and meaner, as they compared them with the glowing description of Richard Wilton's mansion (which had first led to much of the evening's discussion as the result of a certain paragraph in the newspaper). The more sensible of them, among whom were Sherwood and even Tom Street, bore to their respective beds that night a vague feeling of wrong done them by some one. A certain sense of being oppressed, ground down, and trodden under, a feeling of helplessness under it all, a feverish, restless consciousness that something must be done, that a blow must be struck somewhere by some one. Where and by whom?

Where and by whom indeed?

It is a problem, gentlemen of the pulpit, that will not be solved by Sunday sermons on the duty and blessedness of contentment.

It is a problem, professors of political economy, that will not be solved by the iron laws of any social science which leaves out of account the human heart and the human soul.

It is a problem, dearly beloved, you who love peace and quiet, that will not be solved by shutting your eyes to the fact that the skies of the future are jagged with lurid light from the council-fires of labor, at length aroused to a consciousness of its terrible physical strength.

Don't touch upon these things?

Do not arouse passions that are lying numbed? Ah, dear brethren of the noble order of Dilettante, go into the homes of labor and listen to the talk of laboring men. Peep over their shoulders at the newspapers they read, written by crafty men who mingle just enough truth with their devil's lies and slander and a cheap article of virtuous indignation to cause fists to be clinched, eyes to sparkle, and pulses to beat more quickly.

Don't touch the question? Do not admit that there *is* any problem? It is the appeal of selfish interest, just fear, or pure ignorance.

The working-man has touched the question long ago. We see it in his trades-unions and working-men's associations. We hear it in the crackling flames of the Pittsburg riots. We note it in the procession of labor-

ing men, twenty thousand strong, in one of our great cities, bearing such mottoes as

"Bread or Blood!"

"Capital is organized, why not Labor?"

"By organization we will succeed."

"Eight hours' labor enough; the rest for recreation."

Must we leave the problem alone, to be solved by Sam Hall and Job Waters on their own basis?

Do not touch it, forsooth!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MILL-OWNER AND THE MILL OWNED.

THE Sons of Toil were not long in discovering—some of them, at least—that there is something worse from a bread and butter stand-point than working for small pay,—namely, not working at all, with the natural result of drawing no pay at all.

Two or three mornings after the social gathering, during the course of which so much mephitic vapor had been discharged, as already recorded, Richard Wilton was closeted with his chief clerk, an attenuated specimen of manhood, thin and lean, and resembling a mahogany office-ruler as much as possible.

"We must cut down expenses, Williams," said the mill-owner; "we're payin' more for labor than there's any need. I go on supply and demand, y' know, I do; an' when one o' my men's workin' for a dollar 'n a half, while half a dozen other fellers are hungry for the job at a dollar, why I'm losin' money an' p'litical 'conomy's sufferin'. That's where I stand. I've worked my way up, 'n I can't afford to pay more 'n other men do for work, while lots o' others are just sufferin' to do the same work for less 'n I'm givin'."

It will be observed that Mr. Wilton had imbibed the spirit of political economy taught at our colleges, while it may reasonably be doubted that he had given much time to text-books on the subject.

"Take down the time-book, Williams, an' let's look over it." The dependant obeyed, while the short animal with a reddish bristle of whisker on his face lay back in the luxurious chair and watched, with a complacent grin, the deprecating haste of his subordinate.

He had never outgrown a keen sense of brutal pleasure in being able to "order" men about as he pleased. It was one of the luxuries in which the self-made element peculiarly delighted. Williams stumbled, and let fall the book with a loud bang, which gave Wilton a pretty opportunity of cursing roundly, and with a choice selection of expletives indicative of long and careful practice. The explosion of remarks usually recorded in refined literature by means of straight dashes ended with a furious cry of,—

"Git out of here, and send Sherwood in, you thick-headed numskull!"

Williams stood not upon the order of his going, but kept up his cringing, self-deprecatory attitude, with profuse apologies, until a more violent expletive than any that had preceded sent him hastily into the outer office. It is to be presumed that he delivered the message of his employer, for shortly John Sherwood entered the room with a civil.

"Good-morning, sir; you sent for me?"

"Yes, I sent for you. Sit down an' look over this roll with me. There are some names I want to drop, an' Williams can't do nothin' but drop books to-day."

This brilliant play upon words was followed by a horse-laugh of interrogation, as though to express, "Pretty good, eh?" But Sherwood was not effusive, and they proceeded to the business in hand.

It was curious to note the change in Wilton's demeanor. A wolf makes mouths and acts the wolf before lambs without an attempt at veneer, politeness being lost when the victim of the next meal shakes and quivers without a sound being uttered. Before an unknown animal, however, even a wolf is disposed to pave the way by being jocular, or by saying nothing without studied decency.

In the presence of the lamb-like Williams the owner of the Tradelawn Mills never took the trouble to hide the wolf face or to disguise the wolf voice. Sherwood was another kind of an animal, of some species to Wilton

unknown. Therefore, while he could no more conceal his natural coarseness than a wolf can hide his shaggy coat, he was constantly forced to overlay it as best he might with people whom he knew slightly, or not at all, and especially thick was this veneer apt to be when he stood in the presence of one whom he suspected of being his superior. Sherwood was Wilton's superior, and the latter's affability was superb as he secretly acknowledged the fact.

Quickly the practised eyes of the men ran down the lists of names, going swiftly from one department to another, Wilton marking here and there a man or woman to be dropped while Sherwood made a note of the names.

"Croft!" he exclaimed, presently, "Robert Croft! Why, he's the best foreman you have, and has managed the machine-shop for going on twenty years, sir. You must have made a mistake in the name."

"Croft, yes, Croft; I said Croft, didn't I? What do I care how long he's bin in the mills? He's bin here too long, that's what's the matter. He's uppish an' sets the men to complainin'. I don't want him, I tell you."

"His place will be hard to fill, though," objected Sherwood. "He knows the way of the work so well, there isn't a more careful man about the place, nor one you could so ill afford to lose. I wouldn't answer for the way things went for a month after Croft goes."

"Well, who the devil asked you to answer for anything, young man?" cried Wilton, exasperated. "What business is it of yours if the mill goes to ruin, for that matter?"

"It has always seemed my business to look out for the interests of my employer, sir; and if he is so—I mean if he does not get as near to the practical details of the work as I do, and so makes a mistake in judgment, it seems as though I should tell him what I know, that is all."

"Yes, and it's quite enough! When I think o' takin' a pardner I'll call you in, Sherwood, an' put your name on the sign; but I ain't takin' no pardner yet, not quite," rubbing his hands gleefully as he thought of the round results of his single ownership, the new house, the gold-plated harness, the silver dishes, even the coach-dog and a man to stand behind his chair at dinner, convenient for swearing at as for table service. "Oh, no; I ain't advertised for a pardner *just* yet."

Sherwood failed to respond to the cutting irony of this remark, and turned silently back to the book. Wilton had marked about a hundred names, and the young clerk noticed that a majority of them were men with families, and some who had served a long term of years. He had not learned the golden rule that "business is business;" he had a vague impression, absurd as it is, that "the business of a trading community could be transacted on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount," to quote a somewhat famous phrase. So once more he ventured to expostulate.

"Are these men to be discharged outright, Mr. Wilton, and others substituted, or do you intend to reduce the number of hands?"

"Reduce the hands! Why, you're crazy! We've more

orders now than we can keep up with. No, sir! These people have got to go to make room for some o' those that are clamorin' for work here every day. Turn about's fair play, you know. Besides that, I c'n git a hundred new hands for jist a third less than I'm payin' these."

"But, good heavens! Mr. Wilton, most of these men have families; what's to become of them?"

"Let them that brought 'em into the world look out for 'em. The Tradelawn Mills ain't no orphan asylum."

"But those who have worked here for so many years, don't we owe them something? Won't it look a little queer to outsiders to see, for instance, a man like Croft turned off and a stranger put in his place because he'll work for a third less?"

Wilton rose from his chair in a burst of wrathful fury. The veneer melted under the heat of real anger, and the animal shone forth. His short, fat figure seemed ready to burst; the little eyes snapped viciously; the stubby red bristles on head and face seemed to take on a deeper glow.

Sherwood rose too, and stood with a look of fine disgust on his grave face, a face as clear and noble as those of the old Viking blood from whom he had drawn the strong blue eyes and the yellow hair.

The mill-owner broke forth in a torrent of words. "Owe, who? owe what? Do I owe Croft or the like of him anything, because they've taken money in wages from the Tradelawn Mills for twenty years, or fifty years

for that matter! Owe them? Haven't they got their money on the fifteenth of every month since they've been here? What do I owe them? What claim have they? We got their work an' they got our money. Who'll say anything to that? I earned my money by workin' for it an' savin' it. What the devil do I care if other people don't like the way I manage my business? Look ye here, Mr. John Sherwood, you see that those names are dropped as I tell you, d'ye understand? Here, though, let's look at the list. You've left off one name I think, or p'raps I didn't tell ye," scanning the notes which Sherwood had made.

"Who's that?" said the latter, eager to have the interview over, and to escape from the close air of confinement with this human brute.

"The name's John Sherwood. Now go to the devil!"

"Yes, discharged!" he said cheerfully, in answer to the thin-faced Williams's look of query, as he handed the latter the black list, and changed the little ink-stained office coat for one more appropriate to the street.

Williams tried feebly to express his sorrow, but was cut short by a roar for "Williams!" from the other room; and the young man, who had offered advice when he ought to have known it was unacceptable, left the office of the Tradelawn Mills, and the wolf and lamb in secret conclave.

Just before six o'clock that evening Robert Croft stalked into the inner office and confronted Mr. Wilton.

"I'm to be discharged to-night, Mr. Williams tells me."

"You are," said the mill-owner, suavely.

"Any fault of mine, sir?"

"None at all."

"I've been here young man and middle-aged for goin' on twenty years."

The employer did not seem to be greatly moved by the statement.

"I've done my work faithfully and never had a word of complaint against it."

"Greatly to your credit, 'm sure. You've been paid for it, too, hain't you?"

"Yes."

"You say it as though that wasn't any account. What d'ye fellers want, any way? We keep you as long as we can afford to, longer sometimes. Then when we can get the same work done less—— You wouldn't work for a third less wages, would you?" interrupting himself, with a shrewd look at the man before him.

"God knows how I could, when it takes all I earn now to keep body and soul together and a roof over me."

"Ah! I thought so! We're not speakin' o' God now, though. I can git a man to do your work as well as you do for two-thirds what I'm payin' you; in fact, I've engaged him to come on to-morrow. You're one o' these readin' fellers, I hear, an' talkin' too, a deal too much with your mouth if all the truth's told. I think some 'un told me that you'd studied p'litical 'conomy o' nights.

Have you anything to say why a man with mills shouldn't get his labor 's cheap as he can?" This was said triumphantly, as though it were a proposition which could not be disputed, as indeed how could it be?

But Robert Croft was perverse.

"Yes, I have something to say," he said, and the lower animal almost shrank before the rising blaze of anger in the eyes of this man he had but lately owned between six in the morning and six at night.

"Yes, I have something to say, Richard Wilton, and I'll say it now."

It really was too bad that a man who paid out thousands of dollars to his help every month should thus be forced to listen twice in one day to criticisms upon the subject not calculated to tickle his ear. Richard Wilton thought it very hard lines indeed; but Croft looked as though he meant to be heard; and the minute-hand having gotten past the hour of six by the office clock, he was no longer among the army of the owned. There was a defiant glitter in his black eyes that betokened his full knowledge of the fact that he was talking with one to whom he no longer owed anything.

"I have something to say, and I'll say it now," as a movement on the part of his late employer seemed to indicate a willingness to show him the door; but Wilton only drew out a cigar, lighted it with insulting coolness, and leaned back in his comfortable chair as though quite ready and even cheerful at the prospect of hearing a few remarks.

This was a trifle disconcerting. Croft was no orator; but having something to say, he went directly to the point, and, staring past the dull face of the man before him, as though appealing to something beyond, went on,—

"Yes, you've paid me. I know it. You've handed me an envelope on the fifteenth of every month, after you've carefully taken to the last penny your bills for rent and coal. If I've had sickness in my family, the doctor must wait and the medicine bill be unpaid, but you've never lost anything. You've looked out for that."

Here Wilton smiled complacently as he reflected that he had rather looked out for number one. The shadows darkened on the speaker's face as he saw Richard Wilton's cold smile of contentment.

"I've worked like a dog. Every year I've done better work, and you know it. I haven't done as some of 'em, shirked any way to fill up the time till six o'clock. I've thought for you as well as used my hands. I've tried hard to do what I could in my shop to add to the value of every yard of goods made. If I'd been working for myself, and if every improvement had gone so far towards makin' me a better house, giv'n me better food, layin' up something for my old days, I couldn't have done more than I've done for you.

"What have I got for it? You've gotten rich off'n my work, but am I a cent better off than I was ten years ago? Have I got any of the increase that's come from

my work for you? Not a penny! and now what's the end? I'm turned off because another poor devil 'll come for less than I can live on, an' if you last long enough he'll be turned off in time to make room for another. *You* could be put out of your mill to-day well enough off an' able to bear it. Why? Because I've been layin' up money for you all these years; and to do it I've been livin' on just what 'd keep a roof over my head, clothes on my back, and food in my mouth. But I'm turned off now, so's you can put a new dish on your table or a new bond in the bank. I'm an orange, and you've squeezed every drop of juice out o' me to tickle your palate, an' then thrown me away. There's plenty more of 'em for you. I'm a machine, to be wound up and set a-goin' with just enough oil put on to do your work. What do you care? I'm a thing, to be used, trod on, walked over, and given just the poor privilege of living, buried ten hours a day in your machine-shop, so that you can ride in a carriage. Do you think that this is all, Richard Wilton? Do you think, you men with power and money, you men who own the mills, that you can go on much longer ownin' the people that make your mills good for anything? Do you think God 'll stand it much longer to have big houses built on the bodies and souls of men and women? If you don't believe in God, do you think that we people 'll bend like whipped dogs before you much longer, when we get to know what we can do? What are you, in God's name, that you have the power to send me to a workhouse,

while you're in a mansion that I helped to build? What are you, to bring me to crime, perhaps, to keep me from the bottom of the river?

"What have I been in this country where we're always talkin' of the equality o' men? What have I been for twenty odd years but a slave of the Tradelawn Mills? Is it the end? Don't believe it, Richard Wilton, don't you believe it for a minute. Some day you masters 'll learn that working-men have rights as well as yourselves. Woe to you, Richard Wilton, woe to you and to such as you!" The tall figure loomed up in the almost darkness of the evening hour, and waved wild arms threateningly, not at Richard Wilton, whom Croft had actually forgotten, but at the idea of which he was just then the incarnation.

"Woe to you if you don't read more than the newspapers say of the signs of the times. If God don't help us the devil will, an' it 'll be a sore reckonin' for some if *he* takes up the cause of the working-man,—a sore reckonin', a sore reckonin'."

How the result came about Richard Wilton did not fully realize, but to his infinite relief, in a moment from the time he had realized that this madman was standing over him, having apparently forgotten his existence, and threatening an unseen adversary in dangerous proximity to his own immediate vicinity, the madman had gone and he was alone. The mill-owner's cigar had dropped from his fingers to the floor. He had sat in a dull, stupid state of half fear, half animal anger. But,

now the moving cause was gone, Wilton pulled himself together to take account of stock. He was more or less confused by what had occurred, the confusion of an animal struck full in the face, and with a wild ferocity rushing madly and blindly against an unknown enemy. He knew there was fallacy in a good deal that Croft had said. Even the rudimentary logical germ of his narrow mind told him that Croft was speaking absurdly and loosely, as men do who burst out unpremeditatedly while suffering under a sense of personal wrong. Nevertheless there was a biting amount of truth underlying the foreman's words which stung even Richard Wilton. It was quite as well for Williams that he had left his official stool for the day when his master emerged from the inner office. There were but two things to interrupt the progress of Richard Wilton outward. One was Croft's dinner-pail, which in his wrathful forgetfulness he had left standing by the door; this Mr. Wilton kicked into the street. The other was the woman who came daily after office hours to clean up the floors and remove the day's waste. The proprietor of the Tradelawn Mills paralyzed this humble but useful appendage by giving her a dollar, and saying gruffly he hoped her rheumatism was better. Too stricken to reply, she gazed dumbly after his retreating form, and then, as though to express that she was not taken in easily by chaff, sagely raised the coin to her teeth in a professional manner to see if it was good. The fact that it resisted any dental impression in a perfectly satisfactory manner only increased her bewilderment.

"The Howly Vargin be good to us, what 'r we comin' till next?" This she murmured, and then transferring the coin to her pocket, proceeded to the daily damp onslaught of the floor.

Mr. Wilton went home to his gorgeous house on the hill, and, with fewer ejaculatory comments of a fervent nature than usual, ate his solitary dinner and betook himself to his library.

His servants thought a fit of sickness was coming on, but the owner of the Tradelawn Mills was neither ill nor thinking to-night of the state of the market. He sat long before the fire, chewing two-thirds of the cigars he was perpetually relighting, and wondering within the limits of his mental capacity if the devil should take a hand in the labor question just how he would manifest himself.

If Richard Wilton dreamed at all that night his dreams restored him to quite his normal state, for he cursed the morning coffee and omelet with so much of his usual fluency that all fears or hopes of a protracted illness fled from the minds of his household.

CHAPTER V.

A MISTRESS OF ARTS.

SYDNEY WORTHINGTON came down to breakfast one gloomy winter's morning in a mood which agreed with the dull sky and misty discomfort of the world out of doors.

"Hello, Syd!" called her brother Phil, from the window, where he stood viewing with disgust the aspect of nature. It was Philip's way, as I am given to understand it is the way with brothers in general, who are a rude-talking, unappreciative race. "Syd" is not a proper designation for the tall young woman with brown eyes and brown hair and bonny bright face, robed in a pale pink morning gown, who slides gracefully to her place at the head of the table. "Sydney the Superb" was her designation in the fawning school-girl kingdom from which she had been emancipated half a dozen years. But brothers will be brothers, and with a perversion of taste unaccountable to their male friends fail to discover anything superb in the creature whom they venture, without any proper feeling of sacrilege, to hail with "Hello, Syd!"

"Father Winthrop must have put it to you pretty heavy yesterday, didn't he?" continued the amiable

Philip, as they seated themselves at the little breakfast-table shining with glass and silver. "For my part, I can't see why the parsons should take Monday as their special property, as though no one else could be bored on Sunday but themselves. There's a confounded sight more cause for the congregation to be used up on Monday mornings."

"One of your extensive knowledge of Sunday sermons should know, certainly," was Sydney's sarcastic rejoinder, for Philip was not so devoted and regular an attendant at St. Mary's or St. Anybody's Chapel as to give him much cause for complaint.

"Ahem!" coughed the subject of remark, breaking an egg and waiving the question. "What's the particular dumps this morning, though, Syd?"

"Dumps!" sniffed Sydney. "No one has the dumps that I am aware of. This horrid weather makes one feel vicious. I wish the spring would come."

"Yes, but a bountiful nature has provided and even insisted upon Christmas before spring, and what would Father Winthrop say to your eliminating one of the great feasts from the calendar of the church? Where would the blankets and the coal and the soup-tickets be without Christmas? Where would the lambs of the flock find food for daily consumption if it were not for decorating the font and adorning the altar, and hanging the sacred edifice with greens?"

"If some people sneered less at other people's hard work it might be an advantage to them."

"To whom, dear, the people who sneer or the people sneered at?"

Sydney preserved a dignified silence while pouring out a second cup of coffee for Mr. Philip, and the good friend of both the young people, Mrs. Sands, half companion, half housekeeper, put into the conversation mildly,—

"Now, Philip, you shouldn't bother Sydney. Mr. Winthrop's a dear, good man, if he is a little 'high' and does go farther than my poor, dear papa ever thought it advisable to go, and he should be respected accordingly."

The immediate paternal ancestor of Mrs. Sands had been a clergyman of the evangelical school, and the candles lighted in broad daylight on the altar of St. Mary's Chapel were a constant source of anxiety to good Mrs. Sands.

"He does not bother me, auntie," said Sydney, with a lofty glance at her brother. "His ignorance is only amusing."

"Mr. Winthrop, I'm sure, is the hardest-working young clergyman I know, and he does an immense deal of good. He works too hard I'm afraid, and doesn't look half well," continued the benevolent old lady, sinking all thoughts of candles and incense.

"Oh, he'll pull through," said Phil, consolingly. "You people gather around a young parson as though a clerical headache was worse than any other. Jack Kincaid, who was in college with Winthrop, dispersed a flock

of bleating lambs about the shepherd one day as they were discussing the awful destiny of a clergyman, and commenting on a new shade of pink that had happened to color Mark's face at the early service. 'Don't worry,' Jack cried, rather unfeelingly, I must admit; 'it isn't fate, ladies, it's much likelier to be liver.'"

"Disgusting!" exclaimed Sydney.

"Yes, disgusting," admitted her brother, laughing; "but then Jack isn't romantic."

"Not even decent I should say," coldly said Sydney, drawing herself up with the superb air.

"Well, Jack, you know, can't be expected to break the first commandment, having had a religious bringing up, and also having roomed with Mark for two years of his college course. It makes a difference, you see, when you've seen the idol black his own boots."

"Oh, do let us change the subject!" cried Sydney. "One gets tired of hearing the same string harped upon over and over again. It does not affect Mr. Winthrop to be called 'Father,' and he probably cares as little for your Mr. Kincaid's opinions as he does for those of his charitable brother clergymen who called him an 'ecclesiastical milliner.' Milliner indeed! I'd——"

"Oh, change the subject by all means!" broke in Phil, jeeringly.

Sydney blushed. Not at Phil's remark, but that it occurred at a particularly unhappy moment, for as the words were being uttered the door of the breakfast-room opened quietly, and the Reverend Mark Winthrop was

ushered in as one very much at home, which indeed he was.

"Ah, Mark! you're just in time, my dear fellow. My sister here has been expressing herself in an heretical and unseemly manner, especially for one who is an attendant at the early services of 'holy church.'"

Sydney looked daggers and entreaties at Phil in the intervals of welcoming the caller and making a cup of coffee for him.

"Yes?" said Winthrop, with an interrogation-point in the tone of his voice, laughing pleasantly and patiently at his friend, while waving a deprecating hand at Sydney. "Let the boy go on, Miss Sydney. When holy church, as he calls her, gets him in her embrace the rest of us will be taught how we ought to act. What's the outbreak of heresy though, Phil, that has disturbed your morning meditation?"

"Oh, only in general terms; but even from the grovelling and purely mundane stand-point of a worm like me, I don't see how any one can say they've had enough of the church, to say nothing of the parson, and to talk——"

Sydney was getting up to leave the room, her face dyed scarlet, when Mr. Winthrop stopped his friend's chaff by laying a firm hand across the latter's lips.

"When even worms turn too fiercely they must be crushed, Phil. Now consider yourself crushed, and listen to what I have to tell you. Miss Sydney will also, I hope." And Sydney deigned to resume her seat, darting

glances of scorn at her brother, who was completely passive under the process.

"What is it, Mark?" he cried. "New soup-kitchen? Old woman lost the heel off her shoe? Ellen Croft on the rampage again? or are the candles getting low? Why don't you lug out the subscription paper, and put my name down for ten dollars,—from one who gives not wisely but too often,—hey? Is it anything serious really? Your face looks as long as a Celtic funeral."

Mrs. Sands lifted her hands in horror, but the clergyman seemed used to Phil's earthly comparisons and never minded them, but his tone was a very serious one as he responded,—

"Nothing of that kind this time, Phil; something that will give us more trouble I fear than all these put together and taken in the same day. I am sorely afraid that matters are working towards a strike in the mills."

"A strike!" exclaimed brother and sister together, and all their faces caught a touch of the gloom that had settled over Mark's, while Mrs. Sands piously took refuge in the Litany, and devoutly murmured, "Good Lord deliver us!"

"Yes, a strike! I can't tell you just on what I base my fears, for the hints I have had came in the way of confidence, but that a strike is imminent I am almost certain; and withthe very large foreign element employed in our mills, I fear the worse for property, to say nothing of life, should such a thing take place."

"But, good heavens! what cause have the men to strike? There is no manufacturing centre in the country where the people are better used, and wages are nearly equal all over," cried Phil, impatiently. He was not a manufacturer, this young man; he and Sydney had been born in our democratic purple. Descendants of ancestors who had had something to do with moulding the early history of the great commonwealth in which they lived, bearing an honored and respected name, inheriting acres of land upon which part of the city was built, this pair were plainly the favorites of fortune. Phil had no profession at all, dabbling aimlessly at times in literature and looking forward lazily to a career in politics, while Sydney lived the ordinary life of a much-courted society woman, alternating with early services and the yearly soul-cleaning of Lenten discipline.

Phil and Sydney were good landlords as landlords go. They looked after their property, and saw that their tenants were as comfortable as paper and paint could make them. With the abstract idea of labor they were familiar enough, but they had no acquaintance whatever with the laboring people. There was no need of course. Why people should be discontented with their place and lot they could not understand. A strike seemed to them the outburst of bad and selfish passions rather than the rude sign of a real grievance. That there were any real roots of bitterness springing from the soil of natural causes, this they could not conceive.

Winthrop went on: "There has been some talked of

agreement for the reduction of wages all around by the manufacturers, laying the necessity upon the overstocked market."

"Well, that's reasonable, I'm sure," grumbled Phil. "It don't stand to reason that the manufacturers must suffer loss and cripple themselves for the sake of their help, does it now?"

"That's the view taken by the employers at all events, and just at present I am not disposed to take exception to their position. Only, somehow or other, these mill people do not see any signs of the crippling you speak of. They argue that the owners spend as much money, apparently, now as ever. They go further, and say that if there is a standstill in the market, which may last for weeks or months, that the masters are better able to bear the loss, with plenty of property and money in the bank, than the people with no property and no money whatever. One of them who was talking with me, a very well-read and intelligent fellow, said that at the very most it meant cutting off a few luxuries for a short time in the one case, while in the other it meant no less than actual misery and want. Which seemed best? he asked me, and I confess that while I hate the whole notion of a strike, and a miserable struggle between the two sides, it seemed to me that the working-man's side was the justest, and I, indiscreetly perhaps, told him so."

"Of course it is!" cried Sydney. "Why, what a shame; I never thought of it before;" while Mrs. Sands could only lift her hands mechanically and repeat to herself,

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! if my dear papa were only here!" It was a pet theory with Mrs. Sands that the presence in the flesh of her father, who was a young man in the beginning of the century, was the one thing needed to cool down the excited passions of the present day in both Church and State.

"You know Wilton, of course?" said Mark to Phil.

"Coarse old party, red hair, red nose, which he is all the time diligently coloring. Oh, yes, I know him," laughed the other. "He invited Syd and myself to a reception some weeks ago. Syd wouldn't go, I did though. Nothing like looking at life through all sorts of colored glasses. Almost every one was there, of course. Curiosity, I suppose. Such a house, such furniture, such a supper, and *such* a host! Why, he button-holed every one he could get the whole evening telling how he had succeeded in getting it all. 'Made it all, by gad,' Jack Kincaid told me, for I kept away from him; the furniture was enough for me. 'Made it all, by gad, Mr. Kincaid. Poor boy once, and now—you *see*;' great emphasis on the *see*. Jack told him there never was a case exactly like it, such energy, such toil, such innate power; used all the long words he could, and Wilton swallowed them as a fish does bait, swelling a little more at each adjective, and Jack finally capped the climax by saying that no doubt an account of the reception would be telegraphed to Europe, and be in all the leading newspapers the next day. 'Big advertisement for the Tradelawn woollens too, Wilton,' he said, solemnly."

"Mr. Kincaid must be a very shameless creature. I should certainly dislike him," said Sydney, with wrathful reminiscences of his slighting remarks concerning her rector.

"Kincaid! the best fellow in the world," exclaimed Mark, surprised. "Why, whatever gave you such a bad opinion of Jack, Miss Sydney?"

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Phil. "He spoke lightly of holy church, Mark, that's why."

"Nothing of the kind!" flashed Sydney; "but I know that he is positively disagreeable, and I have no wish to know him, or to hear about him."

This was, to all intents and purposes, a practical hint to drop the subject, and Mark went on, wondering at the seeming inconsistencies of this young woman's character, but forgiving them in the same thought, as young men, even clergymen, will.

"Well, to go back to the point of departure, it was this very reception of Wilton's that brought some of the present bad feeling to a head. It seems that just before it he had discharged about a hundred of his hands to take on others at a much lower rate of wages. So that, just at the beginning of winter, these men, many of them with dependent families, were thrown out of work, among others Croft and Sherwood, whom you know."

"Yes, we know Croft and his charming daughter, do we not, Syd?" assented Phil, while both the young woman and the clergyman blushed deeply. Mark recovered and went on,—

"Wilton, it seems, went about boasting that his 'blow-out,' as he called it, had cost him four thousand dollars, as well it might, from the profusion that prevailed, according to all accounts. Since then bad feeling has been growing. Wilton was first among the manufacturers to start the plea of an overstocked market, and is the head-centre of inaugurating a reduction of wages. I am told that he has received anonymous letters threatening him with injury if he goes any farther. How it will all end God only knows, but some effort ought to be made to prevent trouble. Phil, you are a man of position and influence. Can't you go to some of these owners and tell them how the men feel? Tell them that it is not a question of reducing the comforts, but of cutting off the actual necessaries of life. Surely the men who turn out these millions of dollars every year ought to have some claim beyond a mere wage-claim on the men for whom they work. I do not know as I can formulate it, but there seems an injustice somewhere. I have been in the homes of these people. I have touched their lives as closely as any one not of themselves could, and so far as I can read them, there is a feeling of bitterness and hate, scarcely recognized as yet, against the very people who employ and so, in a manner, support them. I can't yet tell just where the problem is, and certainly I cannot offer a solution, but that there is an ever-widening breach between employers and employed in this country I am sadly and against my will convinced. The question I am asking myself is, whether the fault, if fault there be and not

merely a misunderstanding, does not lie at the door of the people with ten talents, rather than with those who have only one."

"Of course it does," promptly responded Sydney, the fine brown eyes moist with feeling and excitement. "Phil, we must do something."

"Oh, yes, certainly, Syd! What shall we do? Build a mill and let the oppressed working-man run it, while we work for day-wages? Or go to Richard Wilton and tell him that he don't know how to manage his own affairs, and that, out of kindness, we have stepped in to drop him a few hints as to practical details?"

"We must do something," repeated Sydney, with decision. "In point of fact, we might do something along the line of both your suggestions, which are of unusual wisdom to have come from you."

"What under the canopy do you mean, Sydney?" cried her brother, staring in amazement, while Mark relapsed into a state of wondering joy,—the joy ever being present in Sydney's presence, the wonder of this moment only intensifying the joy. "Are we harboring a communist, a socialist, a nihilist, or any other sort of an *ist*, in our midst? Or has too heavy a potion of Mark's eloquence produced softening of the brain instead of the conscience?"

"I mean just what I said," Sydney quietly answered. "We could do a good deal worse with our money than to put it in a mill, managed on my plan; but of that we will talk later. Now I wish you would put on your hat

and coat and go with Mr. Winthrop to these mill-owners, to see if there is anything to be done on their side. Good-morning." And Sydney stepped from the room before any excuses could be offered, leaving one of the men puzzled, the other delighted, and both wondering what had come over the superb Sydney. What was it that had flushed her cheek and brought the sparkle to her eye? What was it that sent her to the privacy of her room now, causing her to shut the door even upon the faithful Aunt Sands? What was it that made her brain dizzy and tossed her mind in a hubbub of contending emotions?

Only that one of those moments that come to people but seldom, and to society belles but very, very seldom, the moment of inspiration, in which an idea is born, had come to Sydney. Full of a pleasing pain are such moments. The inspiration and the idea seem too great to be held and utilized by one small brain. The confusion of the birth-pang seems too utterly chaotic to be capable of producing anything in order. This was the bewilderment that enshrouded Sydney as she fled to her room, recognizing that she had fallen upon a moment of inspiration, in which she caught a glimpse, at least, of what might be a purpose in life worth living for. It is a great moment, that of seizing upon the thread which unravels the whole tangled skein of a purposeless life. Sydney had found it, and in the quiet and silence of her room was swiftly weaving a new and beautiful pattern for the future. The careless woof of her hitherto dallying life was shot with a golden warp of purpose.

Sydney had been playing experiments with life. At this moment she was looking forward, wistfully and anxiously, to really living.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EPISODE OF ELLEN CROFT.

THAT allusion to Ellen Croft in the conversation just recorded, which brought evident confusion to the faces of two of the party, needs a word of explanation, even to the extent of taking the reader back to a point of time a few weeks before this narrative opens.

One morning in the late autumn the incumbent of St. Mary's Chapel (being, it must be remembered, of a modest and retiring nature) was the recipient of a curious communication, ill spelled, atrociously worded, in fact, as follows:

MR. MARK WINTHROP.

REVEREND AND ESTEAMED SIR,—of whitch I know it is not my turn to write first, therefore will ask your pardon in doing so. Pleas excuse me for making myself so bold as to tel you that I have heard some of your sermons, with whitch I was very much pleased. I want to be as good as you can make us by talking with us. I

will stop after next Sunday, so you can talk with me. Jennie will, too. I remain as ever,

Your friend,

NELLIE CROFT.

P.S.—Pleas excuse all in hast.

Mark was young and amenable, perhaps, to ordinary flattery, as young men are, but this tribute to his pulpit powers greatly troubled him. To his ever faithful friend and former classmate, Kincaid, he bore the missive with a very dismal face, and asked what was to be done. Worthington as a man of the world was called in, and promptly decided that it was a case for woman's interference.

"Emphatically," said Jack, "for the fair Nellie's mother to interfere, I should say."

"Oh, no," Mark urged, in distress. "The poor girl, whoever she is, is only foolish, and probably means well, but like so many of these uneducated, half-brought-up girls, knows nothing of restraint or discipline upon herself. I suppose it seems to her a perfectly natural course of affairs to gratify a temporary passion of curiosity in this fashion. It must be managed so as not to hurt her feelings."

"Her monstrous vanity, you mean," growled Jack, whose work on the daily paper was not conducive to taking a very charitable view of affairs.

"Well, whatever it is," said Mark, "she must be left a way out of it, that will save her as much shame as

possible, when she comes to see how miserably foolish it all is."

"Which won't be in your day and generation," rejoined the incorrigible editor.

Worthington insisted that it was a clear case for a woman's hand and management, and having unbounded faith in his sister, suggested that Sydney be induced to go and labor with the erring Ellen.

From such a course Mark shrank in horror. "By no means let Miss Sydney know a word of it, Phil. I should be ashamed to look her in the face again if you did."

Finally it was agreed that the best plan would be for Mark to call upon the Croft family before the "fatal Sunday," as Jack dubbed it, and, while not giving a hint that he had been the recipient of any letter from the daughter of the house, should so preoccupy the ground as to give no excuse on Nellie's part for an additional interview.

Jack advised him to take a copy of Tennyson along, and Phil suggested that he wear a sunflower in his button-hole. They both insisted that it was a clear case of "smitten lamb," but Mark shook his head impatiently and scornfully, and carried out the programme as outlined. He called on the Croft family one evening, and found them, for a wonder, all at home. Robert Croft was curt and short in his responses to the clergyman, having an instinctive desire to get away from what he feared was to be an evening of "improving conversa-

tion." But Mark agreeably disappointed this fear by telling two or three very good stories. Mrs. Croft was the hardest to propitiate, viewing with suspicion this frank-talking young fellow, not a bit like a parson, who made his excuse for calling that he had noticed Miss Ellen as a member of his congregation (not saying how the notice had reached him), and had called to look after her as he tried to after all his people, hoping that Mr. and Mrs. Croft were also attendants at St. Mary's.

Ellen brightened visibly, and her black eyes flashed at finding herself not unknown to this "elegant man," as she and Jennie had christened poor Mark.

Mrs. Croft was not easily won, however. Knowing her daughter, as she thought she did, the fact that she had become so regular an attendant at church as to be noticed by the minister was rather a cause for suspicion than otherwise. She never had been a "pr'fessor," she said. "Never had time to go to church, and no money to take a seat, if she had the time. For her part, she didn't see any great good in it after all. She was about as well as if she prayed more and worked less. The folks that went to church weren't so very much better'n her for all they heard there."

This was not encouraging, and, considering Mark's calling, not even polite, but it served to pass the time while Mark was, in a roundabout way, hinting that young people should make their parents the first confidants of all personal matters, even those pertaining to religion.

Every word he uttered was eagerly swallowed by

Ellen, but with the opposite effect to that he intended. The truth must be told, that it was not religion but love that had inspired Nellie to be made good by the Reverend Mark Winthrop. The undisciplined, passionate nature of the girl had taken fire from the sight of the grave-faced young clergyman in his white surplice, and the precious epistle recorded a page or two back was untrained nature making a blind advance towards the attracting point.

Mark was blissfully unconscious of this, and flattered himself that his words were being understood by this would-be penitent. When he arose to go, mentally thanking heaven that a disagreeable task had been very easily gotten over, Ellen accompanied him to the door, and to his horror whispered, as he passed out of the little entry into the yard,—

"Jennie 'n me 'll be sure to wait for you Sunday, Mr. Winthrop."

"What!" cried Mark, amazed and disgusted.

"Why, my letter! Didn't you get it?" the girl asked, in a louder tone and anxiously.

"Letter, letter! Oh, yes, I got something of the kind; but you must not think of such a thing, you must not indeed. It's quite wrong, quite wrong, your mother will tell you."

"Mother!" ejaculated the girl, in rage and shame. "Who cares what she thinks? You don't want to see me, you *don't!* What made you come here then? that's what I want to know," the poor girl cried.

This was desperate, and at the critical moment the inner door opened and Mrs. Croft stepped out into the entry holding a little lamp high, so that it threw a pale light on the scene,—Mr. Winthrop grasping his hat and cane in anguish, Ellen dissolved in tears and convulsively clutching at his coat-sleeve, in a blind effort to detain an object of desire which she felt was slipping away. Over the shoulder of Mrs. Croft peered the dark face of her husband.

It was an embarrassing moment for Mark.

"What's all this, Ellen?" called the mother, sharply. The girl sobbed, making no reply, but despairingly letting go her hold on Mark's coat, greatly to his relief.

"Your daughter is strangely excited, madam," he stammered. "You must talk with her. She has very strange ideas. I do not know what she means I am sure. I think she is excited. Mr. Croft, may I see you a moment alone? I wish very much to talk with you." This was said very earnestly, past the weeping daughter and the hard-faced, suspicious-eyed mother to the lowering features of Robert Croft.

Croft plunged out past his wife hatless, and, taking Mark's arm, drew him roughly into the yard.

"What the devil's in all this, Mr. Winthrop?" he said, in hoarse tones, and then Mark told him simply and plainly what the reader already knows. He spoke at first with the natural embarrassment of a fine-natured man under such circumstances, with a chivalric hesitancy against compromising the girl, but Croft knew he was

listening to the truth, and he wrung Mark's hand with real warmth as he bade him good-night, telling him that he was grateful for his kindness in taking the trouble he had, and interrupting the clergyman's protestations of sorrow at having been forced in self-defence and for Ellen's own sake to have exposed her.

"It was quite right of you, Mr. Winthrop. I beg pardon for having spoken roughly to you; but how is a man to know, and, least of all, acknowledge, that his own daughter is a fool? It's right that we should know it, her mother 'n I. What 'll come of her I don't know. What with her story-papers and the other girls in the mills, and their trash about beaus and dresses, I'm afeard sometimes she 'll go to the bad. And we people they call the 'masses' have just as keen a lookout for the good name of our children as you others do. P'r'aps this 'll be a lesson to her. She 'll hear of it often enough leastways," he added, under his breath, thinking of the hardened heart and merciless tongue of Ellen's mother.

"Good-night, good-night, sir; you're a gentleman." He turned wearily and heavily to enter the house, while Mark walked away to his solitary room, wondering in what his share of the blame of this matter consisted.

He was a morbid fellow at times, this hazel-eyed, brown-curled, grave-faced young man of thirty years, bright in intellect and masterful in his ways; always dissecting his own motives and finding little to comfort him by the examination. That the girl had conceived some sort of passion for him he could not fail to be aware

of now. He felt almost disgusted, but wholly sorry for her; but he probed his heart long into the night to find out where his own fault had been. He was keen enough and ready enough to show other people to themselves, to give them fast hold at least of the threads by which they might unravel the tangle of their own hearts, but he was a coward with himself. All the more a coward in this instance, because the proud face of Sydney Worthington kept rising before him with reproach written in every graceful curve and line. What would he not give for a touch of Sydney Worthington's hand upon his coat-sleeve! It was in a manner some relief to him to brush that particular sleeve with fierce vindictiveness before he appeared to the world the next morning, walking out among men calm and serene-faced as usual, meeting even Sydney with quiet reserve. He had long before acknowledged that Sydney Worthington was a temptation of the devil to divert him from his life-work of curing the world's wretchedness, and had tried to put her aside from among the possibilities of his future. He had very much to learn, this young man.

What passed between Croft and his daughter Mark never knew, but Nellie and Jennie were numbered no longer among the worshippers at St. Mary's Chapel.

Phil had told his sister of the affair in his thoughtless way, and Mark somehow learned that he had been betrayed. This accounts for the deepening color in Sydney's face and Mark's confusion at the mention of Ellen's name in the conversation of the last chapter.

As one result of that conversation, Mark and Philip went on their errand at the imperious command of Sydney, and met with the success that such interference usually brings.

When Worthington spoke of the danger of not giving in to the apparently-increasing discontent of the men, one mill-proprietor declared in solemn language, which evidently met with the approval of his associates, that "these people must not be allowed to dictate. We pay for and put in the machinery, having first built the mills; we provide the material. Now, sir, what business has labor to dictate to capital what shall be paid for using all these elements and transforming them into national wealth? We cannot suffer it, not for a moment. If we gave in once it would be the thin edge of the wedge, and pretty soon, by Jove! we would be carrying dinner-pails ourselves, and our help would be laughing at us out of our own carriage windows." Mr. Howard Millbank laughed heartily at such a huge joke.

When Mark suggested that the help might have a moral right to look for something beyond wages, Richard Wilton cried, "Stuff, sir, stuff! saving your presence as a parson. We hain't no call to run almshouses, the town 'll take care o' that."

The sentiment was a correct one, and fully agreed with by the other employers, but somehow Mr. Wilton was made to feel that the manner of his remarks was not entirely acceptable to his associates.

"Well, Mark, what now?" queried Phil, not over-

cheerfully, as they left the office of one of the mills, where they had found some of the manufacturers in council over their proposed reduction of wages.

Winthrop was gloomy, and proposed a walk down to the bay-shore, where they stood looking out through the russet mist, upon the yellowish, tumbling waters.

"Great heavens!" murmured Phil, as their eyes rested on the sight, "those waves have been surging to and fro, undulating, lifting their heads to a certain level, and then as regularly dropping back again for—how many hundreds and thousands of years? If waves ever think, how horribly monotonous it must get!"

Mark shuddered. He was thinking of the great mass of people in the city behind them, living just as horribly monotonous a life, with not a chance of change for the better, doomed, like these waves, to lift their heads for a few hours out of the twenty-four, but never beyond the one dead level. "And *they* think," he said, over and over to himself. "And they *think*," speaking out the thought to Phil, as they turned away, having talked on aimlessly.

"Better if they didn't, poor devils," was Phil's comment.

"Yes, but they do, and they will, and they *ought*," said Mark.

"Look here, Winthrop, what do you mean, any way? You're not turning socialist on my hands, like Sydney, I hope," cried the other, lightly.

"No," gravely responded the clergyman. "I am

only more and more puzzled, wondering what the Master meant when He said, 'For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath.' It is so bitterly true in this very city of ours. I wonder how He meant it to be applied now in this nineteenth century? I am sure there is a divine depth and grandeur in it. I am sure it does not mean what on the surface it seems to mean. If it does, how can one accuse Mrs. Croft for not being a 'p'fessor,' as she called consecration to His service? Oh, Phil, what am I good for, in this city, where poverty and wretchedness lie next door to wealth and apparent happiness? Where fine women's gowns brush the tawdry imitations of sham gentility, or worse yet, the rags and tatters of real wretchedness? Where the mills and banks hold hundreds of thousands of dollars in idleness, while many and many a home is destitute of the necessaries of life? What am I good for, I say, as a follower and prophet of the One who told the story of Dives and Lazarus? Lazarus was a problem then to the Jews. God help us, he has remained a problem for nineteen centuries. Is he always to be lying at the gate? Can't we at least send him better comforters than the dogs?"

"Now, Mark, pardon me, but you zealous young parsons, with the weight of all social reforms hanging about your shoulders, do not take exercise enough. That's what's the matter with some of our social problems.

You fellows who are set to solve them let the foreign element of an inactive liver come in to make complications. Oh, I don't mean really to make light of it, dear boy," said he, laying his hand affectionately upon the arm of his friend; "but when such men as you, Mark, learn to give yourselves the same chance you are quick to demand for others, I tell you, you'll not only take life a little less seriously, but you'll do a deal more good.

"You are not the reapers of the harvest, you're only the sowers of the seed. Hang me if I'm not getting scriptural myself. You can't do more than you can do. The Lord knows you work hard enough. Leave the results for the season of crops. Don't expect to wade out in the fields in May and gather a harvest. It's against nature.

"As to old Dives and Lazarus, I know how you think about it. I'm sure I sympathize a good deal, too. Between you and Syd you will make such a pious beggar of me that I expect to wake up in church some day and find myself passing the contribution-box. But now, my dear fellow, just look at the matter from old Dives's point of view for a moment. I think the old boy's been abused. He hasn't had half a chance. How was he to blame for Lazarus making a hospital of his gateway? A man don't give a dinner-party for the mere sake of shovelling food down the throats of people. If he did there would be some sense in turning his dining-room into a refectory. But he sets his table and invites his friends for what they can give as well as receive. Lazarus

would have been mighty uncomfortable if Dives had sent out the butler, or whatever those Jewish fellows called him, and had him in to the dinner-table. He had no clothes, no conversation, no wit to give in exchange for the soup and fish. He'd have been dead sure to make a balk of the finger-glasses,—small blame to him, either: they're a relic of barbarism. Lazarus would have felt out of place, now you know it, and if he'd spilled his wine, Mrs. Dives would have taken good care to let him know that her guests were usually gentlemen if they were Jews. And then he'd have felt more than ever that he ought to have stayed in the gate, and received the homage of the dogs."

"Yes, Phil, you're partly right. I don't complain that the 'masses,' to use a devil's word for one's fellows, are not admitted to our dinner-tables. That's beside the mark. I am only dazed and bewildered to realize that, after eighteen centuries of the growth of the Master's kingdom, so few have tables of their own, where they can be respected and self-respecting. I tell you, the demagogues, on the one hand, and the feeble social reformers on the other, are very far off the real question when they shout out execrations at A having ten thousand a year and B nothing. The real trouble lies beneath that. There is something wrong somewhere when A has ten thousand a year and B nothing at all, or when A has a great fortune which B helps to roll up and increase constantly, while all the time B has no chance of a rise for himself beyond the dead level of a bare sus-

tenance. Lazarus at the gate is one thing. Lazarus condemned, as long as the world lasts, to lie at the gate is quite another."

"Yes, yes!" said Phil, a little impatiently, perhaps thinking of his own rent-roll. "We'll talk it over, Mark. We'll see what sort of a start we can make in one little corner of the world. Sydney's hatching something in her small head, I'll be bound. The capacity that girl has for bringing trouble upon her only relative is simply enormous. I look for nothing else, after what was said this morning, than a proposition to divide all that we have and lay a large share of it at the feet of Father Mark for distribution among the suffering saints. Good-by, old fellow; don't forget about the liver." So they parted, Phil to go home to luncheon and a cigar, Mark, to a round of visits among the poor and sick in the neighborhood of his chapel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVE-AFFAIRS OF RICHARD WILTON.

In the midst of the hopes and fears, the plots and plans of the throbbing city life, of which he was a central figure, Richard Wilton found time for other pursuits than those engaging him ten hours a day in the little back office of the Tradelawn Mills.

While Sydney Worthington was working at the prob-

lem of wealth; while the Royal Paternal Toiler was struggling with the problem of fortune, and planning how properly to spend ten thousand a year when it came; while Mark was turning over in his mind the ever-recurring problem of poverty, and the no less disturbing problem of Ellen Croft and her kind, Richard Wilton was also working away at the still more intricate if somewhat pleasanter problem of love. It was the manufacturer's prerogative to invest in the midsummer madness of love as coolly as in anything else that promised the gratification of his senses. Mark Winthrop was one to be weighted down by, while all the time he rejected the reward or punishment of love (as the case might be) as a temptation of the devil.

Wilton was not overwhelmed by any such feeling, fancied or otherwise, and as he dressed himself in the finest clothes he possessed, scented himself so as to become as much a public nuisance as possible, and emerged from his own mansion one starry, bright evening, he was not only satisfied with himself as a self-made man whom others were bound to respect, but had every confidence in himself as a lover.

On the outskirts of the city, in an opposite direction from Wilton's home, were a few quiet lanes fringed with straggling cottages, embedded for the most part in trees and shrubbery. Once this part of the town had been its central portion. Here had been the post-office, and here that place of ever-recurring wonders and delights,—the village store. This was before water-privileges were found

to possess such powers of fascination, and the sound of swiftly-turning spindles was not heard in the land. But the progress of the age in its flight over the land dropped certain seeds along the bank of the river away from the quiet village street, and, as if by magic, mill after mill sprang up until the shores on both sides were lined, and a city had sprung into life. It grew till it touched the quiet lanes, and drew from them about all the vitality they possessed. The post-office was transferred to a paved thoroughfare on the other side of the river. The poor little store still held plaintively on, with a touch of melancholy in even the weather-stained brooms that hung outside, and a perceptible rust on the old-fashioned spades and ploughs that had not yet learned how they were supplanted by newer aids to labor.

The drift of growth was entirely away from the once centre. The quaint houses, with shingled sides instead of modern clapboards, and for the most part dilapidated chimneys, were occupied by maiden ladies and widows with small present means, and little or no future expectations. Occasional boarders were taken, who loved the silence and retirement, who loved them the better perhaps for the reasonable rates at which they were secured.

It was towards this part of the city, for incorporation had engulfed it of course, that Richard Wilton bent his steps a wooing, and before one of the pleasantest of the cottages that he paused preliminary to unlatching the primitive gate.

The Widow Lane lived here with her daughter Mar-

garet. A widow of the war was she. One of the wards of the nation left to its not over-fostering care by the horrors of Andersonville. Little enough is there to be said of the Widow Lane, for little there was of her. Perhaps the long silence of hope deferred that followed the newspaper report, "James Lane among the missing," had worn upon her brain as well as her nerves. She was foolish by flashes now and then, but her daughter Margaret never admitted this, even to herself or to John Sherwood, to whom she confided everything of her eventless life.

Beyond an absorbing love for her daughter, and a never-faltering remembrance of her dead husband, the Widow Lane had but one passion,—an admiration for the man who was now lifting the latch to enter the cottage without an application of the knocker.

Richard Wilton had brought back from Andersonville the last messages of James Lane to his wife and daughter, then a mere babe. On Richard Wilton's knee James Lane had breathed away his life, glad to get out of the hell of suffering within that accursed stockade. It was to Richard Wilton's care that he had committed his family, and Wilton had been apparently not unfaithful to the trust. Through his exertions came the government pension, which enables the widows and orphans of our dead soldiers to starve slowly some years in sight of the grave. The noble recompense of that bloody sacrifice at Andersonville, which a generous republic bestowed upon the family of James Lane, martyr, was just enough

to keep a roof over their heads and, added to by the gratuitous bounty of Richard Wilton, bread in their mouths and clothes on their backs. But then the government allowed for the fact that the Widow Lane could take boarders, and from time to time, against Richard Wilton's wishes, but in later years urged on by Margaret, the widow gratefully availed herself of this privilege.

"Here's Mr. Wilton, Margaret," said the widow, in a high, thin voice, as the well-known heavy footstep crunched the crisp snow on the hardened path outside the door. "Open the sitting-room so that he won't stumble in the hall. Do come in, Mr. Wilton," as the short figure and red face of the man appeared framed in the door-way. "It's so good of you to come. Sit by, do! Margaret, draw out the easy-chair for dear Mr. Wilton."

Margaret did as she was directed, and then retired to the other side of the fireplace, in which was blazing a heavy log furnished by the government, with the assistance of the owner of the Tradelawn Mills.

The latter addressed himself at once, and cheerfully, to the little, plain, old woman in black, who talked for the ten thousandth time of her "dear James and how he suffered."

When I admitted that the manufacturer was engaged with the problem of love, it must not be understood that he was a declared and accepted lover, worrying himself over the strange freaks and sweet mutinies of the loved one. He had not yet reached that state of nervous irritability which comes with the assurance that love is

returned, and is the bitter tinge with which every draught of sweetness is provided. He wondered to himself as he sat on one side of the burning log, looking at the slim figure robed in a plain white woollen gown, whether he should ever reach that stage.

Margaret was now nineteen, and from the time of her girlhood Wilton had been passionately fond of her. Why, he could not tell himself.

She was not like most girls at all. She had been brought up on sorrow, and that love of which sorrow is the sacrament. She literally knew nothing beyond the books her father had left, which were very few, and the four walls of this cottage in a silent lane.

Once a week the bell of St. Mary's Chapel came over the high city walls, dropping its soft notes in at the window which opened from Margaret's room upon the world. Regularly the white-souled girl answered. It was the one outlook, the one interest, she had beyond the cottage until—until that time that comes to most young women (let us, being men and selfish, pray that it may come to all). All the love she had known before John Sherwood brought his modest trunk to the cottage was the maternal tenderness she felt for her mother, with whom she had unconsciously changed places, and the wondering reverence by which she brought close to herself the memory of the dead soldier among the trenches outside the Andersonville stockade.

Margaret had learned so little of life, or was so close to the nature of Eve before she learned too much, that

she instinctively looked up to every one. She was as unconscious as evil, as actually innocent of what evil thoughts could be as the Mother of the Lord must have been when she said to the Angel of the Annunciation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy will."

Is it not good that there are such in the world? They do not add much to our material wealth. They are not always the mothers of children. They do not, as a habit, wear short hair as a protest of intellectual and political equality with men. In point of fact, they seem to do nothing and to add nothing to the progress of the age. Consequently you never read of them in Adam Smith, and modern æstheticism rejects them as cumberers of the ground; but they are so few, may they not be borne with for their rarity? And if there is such a thing, as the few people who know Margaret Lane are ready to assert, let us encourage it. Let us have a womanly purity that we can believe in to the uttermost, when all else disappoints and turns to ashes. If possible, let some women at least be really ignorant of the evil about them. Who would not rather see a look of wondering curiosity on a woman's face at the suggestion of an evil thing, than even the readiest, deepest blush of modesty? The latter shows that she knows of the evil, the former that she is, so far, unspotted from the world.

Perhaps some such thoughts were in Richard Wilton's mind as he looked at the sweet, pure face and slim form cowering down by a corner of the fireplace, and, from

the warm light in the blue eyes, evidently thinking very happy thoughts.

The man grew mad as he gazed and felt the distance, the wide, wide gulf between him and Margaret Lane.

"Let Margaret go for a little while, widow," he said at last. "I have some business matters to talk over with you. Let her go, I say!" almost fiercely, causing the girl to look up wonderingly, as the widow seemed to shrink from compliance.

The latter shivered ever so slightly, and querulously told her daughter to go into the kitchen and look after her bread. The two were presently alone.

"Don't, Richard, don't look at me that way. I know what you mean, but what can I do?" And the feeble woman rocked backwards and forwards, moaning, with her head between her hands.

"It's got to come to a head some time, widow, that's all I've got to say. You must do it for me, an' you must do it soon. What's the use o' my big house, an' me in it all alone? I want some 'un to set at the table with me, some 'un to ride out with me. Why, you'll be there, too, of course you will. Now mind ye," not unkindly but roughly, "I'll marry Margaret by spring, or your pension 'll go, and where 'll you be then, I'd like to know?"

The widow groaned and shook her head. She had no doubt whatever but that Richard Wilton had the power to stop her pension. The widow's idea was purely intuitional in imagining that a man, a self-made man of

millions would have influence at Washington far outweighing the claims of a spot of ground in Andersonville, at the most not measuring more than six feet by three.

This woman reposed a confidence in Wilton which we, knowing him better, are at a loss to understand. But she well knew that, in spite of all her teaching and example, her daughter Margaret had no such trust. Indeed, the innocence of Margaret's character was such that she shrank from all contact with Wilton, dreaded to take his hand, withdrew her eyes from his gaze, held her skirts even from contact with him,—all instinctively. She warred with herself about it. She quarrelled with her own nature, and tried to make up for this shrinking with an effusiveness of words. She was so simple as to believe that she was not loving her neighbor as herself in holding such an aversion.

The widow knew all this from Margaret's own lips. Wilton knew it from the widow. And yet he nursed his passion, tenfold heated as passions will, by the coyness or indifference of their object.

Wilton was afraid of this pure girl. He tried to imagine her tingling and glowing with a tithe of the love with which most men would have been satisfied, and said to himself that nothing could or should stand between him and the possession of this spotless child.

So the widow was the trembling intermediary. She was instructed to sing his praises, to count over his wealth, to describe his every-day grandeur, to dwell upon

the gratitude which was his due. And so thoroughly did she carry out the programme which had been drawn up by Wilton, that the latter was served up every hour in the day, in a variety of beautiful forms and shapes that would have astonished no one more than himself, could he have listened.

Wilton was now getting desperate. Perhaps it was the failure of city society to receive very warmly the proprietor of the Tradelawn Mills. The trouble did not lie in his coarseness and natural brutality, for if the associations of wealth had not civilized this out of him, they had diluted it in a less offensive form, which, upon occasion, he could make fairly bearable to charitable and refined people. Neither did society turn a cold shoulder upon Richard Wilton because he had once been a poor boy. Mere poverty, once laid aside, is an offence easily condoned. But the self-made man had sprung from the gutters of this very city. Old fathers of families remembered him as a dissipated scoundrel, floating about the wharves in company as disreputable as himself. He had been turned out of the very mills he now owned for drunkenness. The war came and bore him off as a hired substitute in Captain Lane's company. The war was a crucible out of which were turned many queer forms. Wilton was one of them. Three years after Appomattox he returned to his native city with a good deal of money and a suddenly-developed inventive genius. Some were uncharitable enough to say that he had probably stolen the money with which he purchased the Tradelawn Mills

from dead soldiers on the battle-field. But the fact that he had sold one patent for a very large sum, and was drawing heavy royalties from the use of another, accounted for his wealth, though it did not account for the possession of a brain with which he had never been credited. Ever since his purchase of the Tradelawn property he had been making money. He was emphatically, so every one said, a self-made man. Politics does not draw the lines as closely as society, and Richard Wilton was elected mayor of the city, with "views" towards the State legislature, and possibly Congress. This satisfied him for a time, especially as he was suffering the potent passion to grow upon him as he looked upon Margaret Lane and saw that she was fair.

Gradually even his dull intelligence awoke to the fact that the men who patted him on the back in the street and sat with him on the same political platform did not invite him to their private tables, and frequented his, for the most part, unaccompanied by their wives and daughters. This was galling and to him inexplicable. He did not know that his mistake lay in coming back to spread the evidences of his prosperity before the people who had known him in a very different station, and as following very different pursuits. Had he taken up his abode in another city, matters would have been far different. Men would not only have borrowed his money, but would have introduced their wives. Fond mothers would have perceived the sterling nature of the man under his coarse exterior, and would have reminded their

daughters that "a man's a man for a' that." They would have laid to heart the fact that a man who could rise from obscurity to the ownership of a factory is evidence of the more interesting fact that he could support a wife and family in very good style (besides, possibly, dying and leaving a rich young widow free to choose).

Fair daughters would have smiled upon this far from romantic-looking man coming in the guise of a wooer. Perhaps they would have smiled at him behind his back, too, but he would only have seen the welcome.

But in his own city Richard Wilton was unfortunately too well known and marked a man. It was pathetically hard on society, and sufficiently hard on him. He hoped a great deal therefore from his marriage with Margaret Lane. No one could resist Margaret he thought, and quite right he was, although she was a poor girl and lived in Howard's Lane. His money would add what she did not possess by nature, and all would be well. His house would be open to a succession of guests; other houses now closed would be open to him, gutter-nurtured though he had been, accompanied by his beautiful wife decked out as he would deck her.

It was pathetic, the longing of this coarse animal nature to be recognized by those whom in his rage he ground his teeth to admit were beyond and above him.

Margaret did not fear Wilton, she did not hate nor despise, she only shrank from him. It is the one state of mind towards a lover which cannot be argued out of existence, nor buried in a fine house, nor driven off

behind a pair of matched horses. The Widow Lane was a faithful, but scarcely a judicious adviser in love-affairs. Certainly her success as a wooer at second-hand was not so conspicuous as to entirely satisfy her would-be son-in-law. Wilton felt in his craven heart that a direct attack upon Margaret Lane would fail, and he had determined to employ a certain strategy. The use of physical force in bringing about compliance in love-matters has long gone out of vogue, but there is a moral force which does very well in the place of the old bravoes. With the widow securely and even admiringly his ally, Richard Wilton had determined to bring matters to a crisis. How the girl could be so foolish as to reject a million of dollars the self-made man could not see, but that she might do this unheard-of thing he had looked long enough and wistfully enough into the rare face and shining eyes to feel very sure.

To-night he had resolved upon a new course of action to communicate to his trembling ally. Margaret stole off from the kitchen to her own room overhead. Here, wrapped in a great shawl, she sat looking at the white landscape framed from the window, listening for a footstep that made echoing music in her heart, and hearing beneath her the current of talk that ran on, little thinking how much it meant for her.

The widow was moaning over the hardness of Margaret's heart, or the obtuseness of her understanding. At Wilton's express command she had never mentioned the word marriage. The way to this must first be

paved, and it must be confessed that had the result of Mrs. Lane's efforts been equal to the extent of her application, a way would have been laid out to the heart of Margaret so solid and permanent that a heavier weight than Richard Wilton might have walked up it unhesitatingly to take possession. To-night the ardent lover was to learn that Margaret showed as yet no sensibility of either of his many attractions, scarcely of his kindness to her mother and herself.

"Is there any one else?" he cried, at last, perplexed. "Does that parson feller, Winthrop, come sneaking around after her?"

"Oh, dear, no!" gently panted the harassed go-between, "and I'm sure Mr. Sherwood——"

"Sherwood!" roared Wilton, in sudden rage, "Sherwood! What Sherwood? and how does any Sherwood know Margaret? It's that confounded chapel, I know," he said, bitterly.

"Indeed, no, it's not the chapel at all, for Mr. Sherwood boarded here long before he ever went to church. I think it's Margaret that took him there."

"Boards here! boards here! Who?" shouted Wilton, still louder. "What's this you've been shutting up from me, Widow Lane?"

"Shutting out, indeed no!" whimpered the widow. "You told us many and many a time you didn't want to know how we lived, or who we knew, or anything about us, only to let you know if we needed anything. I'm sure I didn't know why, but you told us that dear

James left us in your care, and you would be faithful to your old captain's wishes, but that we were to keep to our place and you to yours, and Margaret insisted that we should keep boarders. Mr. Sherwood's been here now for 'most a year, and I knew he was in your office and thought you'd like it. A good, quiet man he is, too. Comes into the sitting-room quite home-like, and walks to church with Margaret and me like a son. If I'd thought you cared to know, why, Lord knows, there's been nothing to shut out from you."

Wilton was purple with spite and anger. This man of whom he, though his master, had stood in awe. This man whom he had insulted a day or two before, and discharged from his work, exulting that it was in his power to do him such an injury. This man above all others was sitting at the same fireside, eating at the same table, and putting on an infernal sanctimonious face in the same pew with the one person in all the world whom Richard Wilton esteemed above himself.

When the first blind wish to smite the pale-faced woman before him to the floor had passed, and he had in a measure recovered himself, he demanded to know all about the circumstances. How long had Sherwood been under their roof? How did Margaret look at him? What Margaret said of him? How Margaret acted toward him? How the evenings were spent when Sherwood was at home? All these questions, and a dozen others, hurriedly put, and following so fast upon each other that the widow stumbled in her answers, re-

vealed a state of affairs highly unsatisfactory to a lover, especially a lover of Richard Wilton's peculiar temperament.

The most that he could extract from the disjointed answers of Margaret's mother was that the boarder read and talked and played chess with the young girl, who, on her part, did not manifest any noticeable displeasure. "But as for marrying, Margaret never thinks of it, and I look a deal higher for her than John Sherwood; you know that, Richard," in a voice of appealing dread, that would have touched an animal more highly developed than the one to whom she was speaking.

"Yes, I know, an' I'll know more than that before long. Now listen to me. That feller's makin' love to Margaret, an' you've promised Margaret to me, d'ye hear?"

The widow nodded.

"Well, you jist send that young man a-kitin' soon's ye can, d'ye hear that, too?"

The widow wrung her hands and sighed in the affirmative.

"Stop, though, stop! P'r'aps it 'ud be better. Lem'me think now." He put his hands in his pockets and paced the room, at first excitedly, knocking against the chairs, which he kicked angrily out of the way, but gradually subsiding in outward emotion, while his brain burned fiercely with the strategic idea which was taking shape.

"Yes! it 'll do, it 'll do!" he said at last, and then he

drew a chair close to the trembling woman, who had been watching him intently and pitifully in her vague terror, mingled with admiration, of the one to whom she was conscious she owed the roof that sheltered her.

"Now listen to me."

For more than an hour longer Margaret above was conscious of the low, monotone, mumbling beneath her while Wilton was revealing his plan to her mother. The changes that followed each other in quick succession on the widow's face, as the man whispered in a hoarse undertone, were curious. An expression first of horror grew into one of endurance, then of almost satisfaction; and finally as Wilton arose and looked at his watch, repeating his last words, "Remember, not a word till the time comes," his companion was beyond a doubt carried away with a pleasurable anticipation which caused even her faded eyes to sparkle.

Wilton departed, and walking down the lane crunching the snow under his heavy tread, he brushed against a young man coming briskly along humming a gay tune. Drawing his coat up about his face, the mill-owner shrank from the contact.

"John Sherwood," he muttered to himself, as he paused to see that the stalwart young fellow turned into the Widow Lane's gate. "Wait, my man, I'm not quite even with you yet. Not quite, but jist you wait. Your time's comin', blast you. I ain't climbed to where I am to see you git in ahead. Oh, jist you wait a bit!"

"Good Gawd! what a hawful beast that man is!" con-

fided Wilton's servant, James, to Jane, the chambermaid, the next morning, as the result of his brief interview at the door of the Wilton mansion with the owner thereof on the night in question. And Jane, having had some experience, was fully qualified to say, "Awful ain't the word, James; willainous reptile more likely."

"Like as not," said James; "but you're jest beyewtiful this mornin'." And as James advances, while Jane modestly but not too hurriedly retires, the writer bashfully draws a curtain over what follows.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MASS-MEETING OF THE WORKING-MEN.

On the day before Christmas, which fell this year on a Friday, a paragraph in the *Evening Herald* announced that all the mills would shut down that evening at six o'clock, not to begin work again until Monday. The intervening Saturday was made an extra holiday, for which, of course, the help would be sufficiently grateful, to greet with more or less composure the notice served upon all alike, that a reduction of ten per cent. would go into effect on January 1st. The mills shut down that evening, and as usual the army of people, numbering many hundreds, poured out into the street, but not

as usual to hurry directly home. More suppers than that on the table of Mrs. Croft grew cold that night before being eaten. Knots of men gathered on the corners. The women and girls huddled curiously together, wondering what their lords would do, hoping, most of them, cravenly of course, that there would be no strike. Women have not been inheriting the curse of mental and physical dependence for several thousand years without being able and willing to brave a little thing like a ten per cent. reduction of wages and make no complaint.

So the men cursed at employers and among themselves, and finally dissolved without settling anything save that they were oppressed and abused. Many a rude oration was delivered to admiring audiences at poor supper-tables that night; capital was reviled roundly and labor exalted. Nothing was in the air but "strike" and "no reduction." It may be supposed that the women, having their men alone, and so at a disadvantage, begged and pleaded that they at least would go into no strike. Instances of past combinations were brought up, combinations that had resulted in nothing and worse than nothing. The misery, starvation, uselessness, were all urged, one may not doubt, by these poor women,—the women buoyed up by no excitement, like the women at home while the men are at war, who see only the lists of dead, wounded, and missing without feeling the glow of battle and the mad delight of carnage. What promises were made by obedient husbands and fathers that night we do not know, but there was no evidence of peaceful intent

in the broad placards that stared church-goers in the face on the morning following, the Feast of the Blessed Nativity. There was a distinct contrast between the song of the angels, sung by little white-robed choristers in St. Mary's, "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men," and the invitation covering every bill-board and vacant fence space in the city, reading "Attention, Working-men!!! A mass-meeting of the mill-operatives of this city will be held in Carson's Hall on Christmas afternoon at three o'clock. Let every man be present. Now is the time to stand out against the oppression of our masters. No women or children will be admitted. Come!!!"

Again it was hard on the women. They were operatives as well as the men, but by command of that mysterious organization, "The Central Committee," which was the signature appended to this summons, they were reminded that men were the natural directors of their destiny. While their fate was being decided they must remain waiting, if not in silence at least in submission.

Richard Wilton saw the notice, and at once sent round a call to the owners to meet in his office at the Tradelawn Mills at the same hour. Then he went home and cursed fluently the whole class of working-men from head-clerk down to office-boy. It was by no means a peaceful Christmas to the inhabitants of the Wilton mansion.

Sydney Worthington left her brother smoking his after-breakfast cigar, to attend the service at St. Mary's, and shuddered as she saw the notice flaming from the

walls. It seemed pitiful to her that on this day of peace bad passions should be stirred up, and she wondered how and with what feelings He must be looking down upon all this approaching strife. The great idea in her own mind was taking clearer shape, and she almost wished that she could go to this mass-meeting and tell the working-men what she had in view. But as she brushed against group after group of loud-talking, rough-dressed men she drew her rich cloak a little more closely about her, and mentally thanked heaven that after all it was not a woman's place. "All sorts and conditions of men," as fervently uttered by Mark Winthrop, somehow comforted her more than usual that morning.

Robert Croft, who had taken a great fancy to Winthrop, left a knot of fellow-workmen and dropped into the little chapel, but thought more of what he should say at the coming meeting than what Mark was saying to him. The placards worried Mark Winthrop, and were constantly before him all through the service. The peace of the day was somehow broken even for the prophet of peace.

Mr. Thomas Street did not go to church that morning. It was with more or less exertion that he could bring himself to "show up" even on Sunday, and not having sat long enough, or patiently enough, at the feet of the church, he did not conceive it to be the religious duty of a father of a family to disturb the holiday quiet even of the greater feast-days by such Sunday work as going to church.

But the mass-meeting was another thing and fell quite in the line of his duty, for he had begged a reporter's badge of the amiable local editor, who was glad to be rid of the task himself, and was to attend the gathering as representing the press. These were great occasions when he stepped, as it were, out of the mechanical and into the purely intellectual spheres of newspaper work. The occasions were rare indeed, for Coddington found it more trouble to reduce the rhetorical exuberance of his reports to current English than to do the work all himself. Coddington was going into the country to-day, for one of the few holidays that are the lot of hard-working journalists, and with many cautions delegated the work to his eager compositor. Kincaid had promised to look in upon the meeting also.

At three o'clock Carson's Hall was full to overflowing. What an assemblage of men! There were faces indicating keen intelligence, and faces on which was plainly stamped the riot of uncontrollable passions. The problem of life had marked itself in various ways upon the brows of this mob of clamoring men. It was a curious study if there had been students there to make the comment. Brutality, crime, despair, indolence, were all represented in the tossing sea of heads which turned for the most part dull and lowering features towards the man who came to the front to call the mass-meeting to order.

It was in vain for a few moments that he rapped with a heavy hammer upon the little table on the platform, and hoarsely shouted "Order, gents! order!"

Who ever saw a mass of untrained men gathered together, for however serious a purpose, but that saw first the ludicrous side of their own performances? The man now calling this crowd to order was well known to most of them present, and they were not to be cheated of some enjoyment even on such an occasion.

"Bully for you, Johnny!"

"You ain't hitting half hard enough, old fellow!"

"Don't hurt the table!"

"He's had turkey for dinner, turn 'im out!"

These remarks and a hundred others of like import were roared out, and were exasperating as well as discouraging; but Johnny Wild knew his men, and good-naturedly worked himself into a perspiration, shouting and gesticulating until something like order was evolved out of the confusion. Then Johnny, having gotten their attention, held it without much trouble. The surface jollity soon gave way to a sense of the serious work that lay before them. Johnny was not sensational in his speech. He said, simply and plainly, that they all knew the reason of this meeting. A reduction of wages all round had been determined upon by the bosses. Every employer of help in the city had come into the plan, so there was no appeal from one to the other. If anything was to be done the working-men must do it themselves. Here Johnny waxed eloquent, "For our wives, our daughters, our sons, and"—here inspiration was giving out and perspiration setting in, as is sometimes the case with more practised orators—"and our sons' sons to the

third and fourth generations," roared Johnny at last, throwing a halo of Scripture about his remarks. The closing sentence was greeted with terrific applause, and Johnny sat down, calling upon "any gent" for further light upon the subject. A hubbub of voices at once arose, and fifty would-be speakers sprang to their feet at the same moment, wildly waving their arms and beginning to deliver invectives upon capital suitable to the occasion. The chairman was powerless to stem the tide and sat down despairingly, while the mob hooted and howled, until finally some one sung out, "Croft!" and then cries of "Croft!" "Croft!" were heard from all parts of the hall. Robert Croft was widely known and respected among the men, and directly he forced his way through the crowd and stood upon the platform, silence fell upon the throng, and eager faces were turned towards this man, whom they knew had recently been "turned up" without cause, and towards whom they instinctively looked for guidance in the present crisis.

Croft stood up with his arms behind him and began: "I ain't a speaker, men, you know that. But I ain't a machine either. I can think a little and feel a great deal. That's why I'm here. I ain't no call to be here, I suppose, seeing I'm not a working-man any longer. But I ain't been a gentleman so long that I've forgotten what I used to be." This was said ironically and greeted with a derisive cheer.

"We're here, men, not to talk treason or politics. We've got no call to say that we're all right and our

masters all wrong. We're here to know what we can do to prevent this reduction. It don't seem much to them as orders it. Why should it? Ten per cent. off Johnny Wild's wages, there, is only fifteen cents. That's only what a good cigar costs. Fifteen cents a day is only ninety cents a week, that ain't much. Oh, of course not. How do *they* know that ninety cents a week means a whole day's food taken away from us? We've got to live and go to work that day same's the others, though. Food costs us just as much. There ain't been any ten per cent. reduction in the flour and potatoes that I've heard of. There ain't been any ten per cent. reduction in the sellin' price of the goods we make by our labor. We've got to pay just as much for our clothes to Wilton and the others as though they hadn't ordered us to make 'em for ten per cent. less."

"Somethin's wrong somewhere. Where is it?"

"Tell us, Croft!"

"Say it out, Bob!"

The mob was getting a bit unmannered again, until Croft raised his hand to quiet them, and burst out, "I'll tell you where it is. It's in such houses as Richard Wilton's, while we're to live in the gutter. It's in fine horses and carriages, that spatter mud on us as we go by 'em. It's in the bank-stock, and mine-stock, and railway-stock that they pile away outside of their mills, getting richer and richer, while we're just the same, or getting poorer and poorer, as I've a good show to do just now. There's where it is. They keep getting more out of us, and

don't give us anything for it. We're ladders they climb up and kick us down. They don't care so long's they're up. Then they talk about us being communists, and Lord knows what besides. We don't want to take away their houses and horses and bank-stock. We only want half a chance to get some of our own. We don't ask them to *give* us anything, we only want what we earn. An' if we don't earn more'n enough to feed and clothe us, that's our fault; but if we do, then we should have it, and, by the eternal, we *shall* have it. P'r'aps I shouldn't say anything about a strike, seein's that I can't lose by it and you must; but you know, men, as I wouldn't say now what I wouldn't dare to say if I was foreman of the Tradelawn machine-shops, as I've been for twenty years, and I say the time's come to kick against the bosses. I say, strike! It's better to starve like men than to half starve like dogs. My voice is for a strike."

A great shout went up as Croft sat down. The mind of the mob was with him in his last words. There were many in the crowd who went far beyond his position. There were many who went not so far. But the mass were with the last word, "strike!" And it rang through the hall in a wild, mad, exultant shout.

Croft had no sooner seated himself than another figure was seen making his way to the stage. He was a man who was a stranger to all but the members of the Central Committee. A "working-man," who, since the callow days of his youth, when he knew no better way, had

never done a stroke of work, except with his tongue. He was a professional working-man, an agitator, who told the masses of their wrongs in burning language, for fifty dollars a speech and expenses. He was from New York, imported for the occasion, with much experience and craft in his peculiar work. Johnny Wild introduced this labor reformer to the audience, who, attracted by a strange face first, and soon carried away by his florid eloquence, listened even more eagerly than they had to Croft. Indeed, this man knew more of the business than Croft did. He had worked up many a strike by speeches at fifty dollars and expenses. With the after-results of course he had nothing to do. Many a woman had cause to curse this man had she known it. Many a workman had heard him talk glibly of the wrongs of the laborer and the oppression of employers, who, if he had known what poison he was distilling, would have thrown him into the nearest water deep enough to drown him. But it never occurred to the people most deeply interested what they actually owed this smooth-speaking agitator. He appeared before them as the advocate of down-trodden labor. He used certain expressions that had become the cant of the working-man's cause, and laboring-men, like their employers, insist upon being led by the sound of a shibboleth rather than by the reality of reform.

This man was speaking now. Some of us know his patter quite well, and have had it quoted to us as wisdom.

"Ah! my friends, it is grand to see this great uprising of the masses of the people, long bending beneath the oppressor's lash. The flag of labor floats like a banner of liberty and progress. Upon its unstained pattern is the motto that called it into being, *Labor omnia vincit.* Ay, my oppressed and suffering brothers, the great heart of labor throughout this magnificent country of ours is throbbing this moment in unison with the thought that finds utterance at this great meeting. Why should we, should we, I repeat, sow that others may reap; build that others may inhabit; work that others may lie at ease? Our common manhood cries out against such a degrading slavery. The honor of our wives and our daughters is at stake, the manliness of ourselves and of our sons is in danger. Rally, then, to the great and noble cause of defiant labor. Down to the ground with the proud upstarts before whom we have too long cringed. I echo the words of the oppressed brother who preceded me from this forum of the people. Strike, my brothers, strike! and let our proud masters see that we are not mere worms, to be trodden upon and then swept out of their path. I repeat it, strike! You will not be alone. The treasury of the laboring-men throughout this broad country is full to overflowing for their oppressed brethren. You will not be allowed to suffer. I speak not without authority when I say, let not the good cause be stopped for lack of means. You will have assistance. You will have help. When the brazen gate of Capital yawns open on Monday next to receive you for another

week's grinding in its jaws, go not in. Strike! I say, for the honor of the working-man and the cause of humanity."

And more such twaddle, surely worth fifty dollars and expenses. Sherwood was leaning up against a window at one side of the hall, heart-sick and mind-sick, as he realized, from the cheers and bravoes that greeted this unctuous friend of the working-man, how hard it would be to get them to listen to common sense now. He had been disappointed in Croft. He was disappointed with the course the meeting was taking. There was no real counsel, no deliberation. It seemed as though the men had forgotten the purpose for which they had come together. Bad passions were in the ascendant, but he would make one last effort to stem the tide, and while the last speaker was hurrying away to catch a train, with his fifty dollars and expenses safely tucked away in his pocket, Sherwood took the platform in his turn, and after excited efforts on the part of Johnny Wild to quiet the boiling enthusiasm of the throng, he was finally able to gain their attention. Quietly, and with no brilliancy of words, he re-stated the cause of the present meeting, and then went on to show how little could be accomplished by a mere strike,—at least how foolish it was until other means had been fairly tried. He urged the appointment of a committee to wait upon the mill-owners and consult for the best interests of both sides. He begged them to remember the results of many strikes in that very city; how, always, they had failed in the very

end; how men had lost one, two, or three months' time, and then had gone back to work at the same or reduced wages, in debt, and the more helpless for the failure they had made.

Thus far he had been listened to, at first with evident favor, then with glances of surprise from face to face, then with low mutterings; finally the oppression of his unsympathetic ideas grew too heavy to be borne, and in the midst of his speech a burly, six-foot, brawny-handed man sprang up and interrupted him with a cry, "Here, I've got a word!" Sherwood stopped instantly, and a deathly silence reigned, while all eyes were turned upon "Terrier Bill," as the speaker was called. "I've jest a motion to make, Mr. Chairman, an' I wants to prepare myself." Suiting the action to the word, he rolled up both sleeves over the brown, muscular arm. "I just moves, sir, that the eliquint gent as is shootin' off his mouth from that there platform be dropped out the winder, and I'm willin' to be 'pinted cheerman of the committee to do it."

A yell of delight broke from the throats of the men, and Sherwood sadly left the platform, while Bill unrolled his sleeves and sat down again, having accomplished his purpose of breaking up the speech that was "agin' all reason," in his mind. Sherwood joined Croft, and together they left the hall. The proceedings now went on, uninterrupted by any glimmering of reason. A mighty shout of "Ay!" to the question of "Strike or no strike?" sufficiently indicated the sense of the meeting,

and after a committee of representatives from each mill had been appointed to meet at once and draw up a plan of procedure, the meeting slowly melted away.

Sherwood parted from Croft almost in silence. Neither said anything of what had been said in public by the other. Croft went home, where, later, as he was smoking his evening pipe, he was waited upon and informed that, notwithstanding the fact that he had been discharged, and so could scarcely be called upon to strike, he had been put on the executive committee of the strikers' league.

"Strike!" snarled Mrs. Croft, after the committee had departed. "Strike! oh, yes, strike! Much good it'll do. You'd better have not been quite so offish with your master, Robert Croft, and then you'd a been at least getting day-wages. I thought day's-work was the lowest step we'd get, at all events. Now it seems we're going lower and lower. Perhaps we'll end in the town-house. Who cares now if we do? I've been suffering for years. I've got used to it now. Oh, yes, you'd better strike, Robert Croft, it won't be any the worse for your family than you've done before."

Croft said nothing, only asked where Ellen was.

"Out, of course. Where do you s'pose? On the streets, o' course! She's goin' to strike with the rest of you, I s'pose. It'll give her more time to gad about with that Jennie thing. The Lord pity me, with a stick for a husband and a fool for a child."

This was of a Christmas evening, and the Croft family

were celebrating it as it is celebrated in many a house. In fact, I think the tender motto, "God bless our home," worked in the earlier days of married life by the then soft fingers of Mrs. Croft, hung somewhat awry over the kitchen clock.

From the mass-meeting Sherwood, after leaving Croft, went directly to the hotel which served Winthrop in place of a home, and found the clergyman in his little study, assisting the digestion of his Christmas dinner by means of a mild cigar, for Mark, not having the fear of petticoat popes before his eyes, indulged in the pernicious, not to say unclerical habit.

"What the end will be God only knows," said Sherwood in conclusion, having laid the meeting in full report before Winthrop, who was anxious to hear all about it.

"Well, it's good at least that He knows, John."

"Yes, if we could hope for His help."

"Hope! know it, John. This isn't the devil's world, however much some of us try to think and make others think it is. All these questions will be settled some day. Truth grows slowly, but on the whole it grows. There is a way out even of this miserable struggle between labor and capital in this country. A way out that has been worked and proved in England. It will come here as sure as the struggle now is going on that will bring it about."

"A way out? What?"

"Co-operation, Sherwood. Co-operation is the solvent

of what we are blindly calling a conflict between labor and capital."

"But they tell us that co-operation has failed."

"Failed! Oh, yes! as the beginning of all experiments are failures, but co-operation to-day is not a theory that remains to be tried. It is not a bubble that has been blown and exploded. It is a solid fact in England, it may be an actual fact here. It will not come all at once; it will be long in coming and working well even here and there; but there is a sentiment slowly developing that will force co-operation upon capital and labor in the end, whether the one or the other fights against it or not. I believe it will be adopted not only as a moral duty, but as a matter of policy. The capitalists will find at once that they are the natural friends of the laborers, and the ground will be cut from under such blatant demagogues as the one you speak of who talked this afternoon, doubtless not without a fee for himself. It will teach laboring-men that they are in no sense at an irrepressible conflict with capital. Co-operation is the acknowledgment and practical working out of the fact that the profit of the earth is for all. It makes the capitalist a laborer in the sense that he is one any way; but it makes the laborer also a capitalist, which without co-operation he is not, and, except as the concession of wealth save in a few isolated instances, he can never be."

Sherwood sighed heavily. "God grant it; but in the mean while what?" he said.

"In the mean while," said Mark, rising to his feet and

pacing the narrow limits of his study floor, glowing with a noble zest of hope and trust. "In the mean while, waiting and patient, we must work, and if need be we must suffer while we work. It is the law of nature that sees no great change brought about without the period of quiet preparation, of environment, which seems idleness to one who merely looks on. Great reforms come on slowly. The pause of God is always before the harvest of earth. Perhaps some of these knotty problems would long ago have been solved could men have learned the gospel of standing still. But the problem will be solved, John; all problems will; and it is given to our age to find the waters troubled at the right moment. Don't you give up to the accursed materialistic chatter that seems to be sweeping all before it just now. It is a self-seeking age, I know, and a dollar-worshipping age, but in the crucible are some other elements than those, my man. I tell you in this one thing to mark my words and wait. You will see that not the indifference of wealth on the one side, nor the violence or the begging of the whole question by labor on the other, will prevent co-operation."

"The millennium, sir, I fear!"

"Not the millennium, John, at all, but common sense and common justice; there's a deal more of both in the world than we give it credit for. Just you wait."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLAN OF A WOMAN AND THE SCHEME OF A MAN.

SYDNEY WORTHINGTON, in struggling with her great idea, had only to go to books in her brother's library to find columns of statistics and whole reams of facts which might have effectually discouraged her from proceeding with her plan. Fortunately for her enthusiasm and courage, she knew nothing of this, as how indeed should she, being entirely certain that she had proved Solomon in a mistake, and had found something new under the sun? For Sydney's new idea was only the old one of co-operation. Had this reformer in petticoats but known that very wise men scoffed at the idea, she would not have thought of it a second time; but before she dared to speak a word upon the subject, fearing the ridicule of her brother, she had actually planned out a scheme in her bright brain,—a scheme which was no less than vain theorists have planned and failed in carrying out for merely local causes. Sydney's scheme needed the two things necessary to the perfection of every experiment in social science,—men and money. Her scheme, in other words, was the actual literal co-operation of capital and labor, with equal opportunities for gaining the profit that

should arise from the joint effort. Sydney did not know, of course, that she was deliberately ignoring and putting aside the Witenagemote of modern Dollardom, and substituting a scheme of life which is not only possible, but has been successfully worked out in our mother-country across the sea.

As developed in Sydney's mind the plan was this: To turn some of the bonds that lay in the vaults of a safe deposit and trust company, disturbed only at certain regular intervals for a certain interesting purpose, into a mill and appurtenances for the manufacture of "stuff,"—this was Sydney's somewhat unbusiness-like way of putting it. A stock company was to be formed, consisting of every one in the entire establishment, from employer to the youngest child. In Sydney's plan there was to be no one connected with her factory who did not own at least one share of the stock, which was to be put at so low a par value as to enable every one to come in, or in case of no ready money, the sum was to be taken from the first month's wage.

The idea seemed a beautiful one to Sydney, and, fortunately, before she allowed her secret movings to escape her she became so engrossed, so satisfied that by her plan co-operation was the real solvent of the labor and wealth question, so pleased that she had fallen on so great and wonderful a way to ease some of the present misery, and to brighten the future prospects of at least a small part of that class of people called the "masses," —whom she instinctively associated with tin pails and

regular hours,—that her position was strongly fortified, when, as she expected, her brother scoffed.

"Why, it's been tried over and over again," he said, on Christmas evening, as they adjourned from the dining-room to the library; "over and over again, and always failed."

For a moment Sydney was fairly abashed. That her great plan was not original with herself this was bad enough, but that it had been put to the test and found wanting, this was almost disheartening. But she soon recovered. If others had thought of it, it was a sign that it was not a foolish young woman's whim (which idea had secretly distressed her), but had also been thought worth trying by men.

"Very well, then," she answered, coolly, "we will use the experience of those failures and try again."

"But I can bring whole encyclopædias to show you that the thing is pure moonshine."

"I can bring you a woman who rises superior to encyclopædias."

"It's money worse than thrown away."

"I can afford to throw away some, Phil, in the attempt to help the struggles of some people who have as much right to bright and happy lives as I have."

Philip Worthington stared. This was Sydney the superb, who never ventured on the street during the hours that mill-people were going to and from their work for fear of being jostled by the crowd.

"But, Sydney, people will laugh at you."

"Laugh at *us*, you mean," with a little saucy nod. "Who will? Richard Wilton? I'd a deal rather he'd laugh at me than speak to me."

"But our friends,—the Millbanks, the Eltons, the Blackmores."

"They laughed at me for helping Mr. Winthrop start the day-nursery down near the mills; but Mrs. Millbank is one of the managers now, Gertrude Elton is a weekly visitor, and Mr. Blackmore gives us a ton of coal a month."

"But this is different. I must say, Sydney, I think it's—it's——"

"It's different, dear, that's all."

The bright, laughing, *riant* face took on a serious look. The brown eyes grew a little moist, the scarlet lips trembled a trifle.

"Yes, dear, it's *different*. People aren't burnt nowadays for being heretics, they are only scoffed at and jeered politely in refined language for being different from what public opinion decrees they should be. Who makes public opinion? Should not you and I have as much right as any one else? And if we begin such a movement as this, how long do you suppose people will laugh at us? Only so long as it takes them to realize that we are in earnest. And then at the first moment of success they will come over to us in droves, and then *our* ideas will be 'public opinion.' How I hate 'public opinion,' any way!"

"Sydney, you are a radical revolutionist, and I am

confoundedly ashamed of you. The first I know you will be taking to short hair and speech-making. When do you think of running for Congress?"

"When the people discover that their present representatives go to Washington mainly to send back seeds and documents to their constituents, and to pull wires for a second and third term."

"You are worse than I thought. You are a social anarchist. But just how are all these beautiful schemes to be carried into effect? Do you expect to convert Richard Wilton, and so make the Tradelawn Mills a sort of anteroom to paradise?"

"I have nothing to do with Richard Wilton. My own dear brother will give me all the help I need. Now, Phil, won't he?"

"Your confidence is as amazing as your impudence, Syd, and that is making a pretty strong comparison. I help you, indeed! Not while I am out of the control of a conservator."

But Sydney knew Philip better, and in the end it was determined that Winthrop and two or three business acquaintances should be consulted as to the preliminary details. "If I am going to play Don Quixote, I propose to have a whole army of Sancho Panzas to help charge the windmills." This was Phil's comment, and the sister went to her reading and writing content, while the brother sauntered down to his club.

This was the plan of a woman.

Tom Street had returned from the mass-meeting feel-

ing as a Son of Toil should at the assertion of Toilers' Rights. Patient Mrs. Tom bore with his tirades against the oppressors of labor and the encroachments of capital, while the children listened with dilated eyes to his description of the afternoon's scenes, which he was now diligently engaged in transcribing for the next day's paper.

In the midst of the toils of composition the household was disturbed late in the evening by a loud and prolonged knocking at the front door. Tom answered promptly, and, peering out into the darkness, asked the caller's name and errand.

"Sherwood, you know; let me come in, Tom," cried the well-known voice.

"What under the heavens is the matter with you, John?" exclaimed Tom, as he saw before him the tall form of Wilton's late clerk, with disordered clothes, tangled hair wildly pushed back from a forehead that was damp with perspiration.

"The Widow Lane! Have you seen her or heard from her?" cried Sherwood, excitedly.

The widow was a distant connection of Mrs. Street, and occasionally, though much in doubt as to how Richard Wilton would like the idea, spent a few hours of the evening in her home.

"Widow Lane? No! Why, old fellow, what *is* the matter?" Tom asked, anxiously, startled out of his usual carelessness by the wildness of John's demeanor.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Street, appearing in the

little sitting-room door that led into the hall-way. "Oh, you, Mr. Sherwood! Were you asking for the Widow Lane? She was here for an hour or two this afternoon while Tom was at the meeting, but she's been gone now since six o'clock. She and Margaret walked over, and a carriage came for them. I couldn't see just what sort it was in the twilight. Why, isn't she home yet? What can have happened?"

Here John briefly and incoherently explained how that he came home to supper late to find the cottage dark and empty. One of the neighbors had seen the widow and her daughter go off in the afternoon. That was all, and he had waited until ten o'clock, when, fearing something serious had happened, he had come in haste to the only place where the widow was ever known to spend an hour outside her own dwelling. Now, what had become of her? Whose carriage had taken her away? for they all knew that the Lane finances would not warrant the indulgence of such luxuries of themselves. Tom and his wife were puzzled, while John was harassed and sorely bewildered.

It was all so strange, so out of the common, so complete a break-up of the monotonous life, that Margaret's lover felt some disaster and trouble impending.

The Streets could offer no solution and small consolation, but Tom was so genuinely affected by his friend's state of mind that, leaving his brilliant paragraphs, he drew on a shabby overcoat and gloves and set out for the cottage with Sherwood, late as it was. He was, profes-

sionally perhaps, in search of an item, as well as moved by friendship and regard. The passion for items forms a sort of sixth sense with every well-regulated man employed about a newspaper office. But Tom did manage to sink the shop in real sympathy, being somewhat acquainted with the love-affairs of John Sherwood. Even silent and quiet love-affairs make themselves apparent to one's circle of acquaintances. "There can't be any harm, you know, John," he said, consolingly. "Distressed damsels are not carried off bodily now as they used to be."

John had nothing to answer, while Mr. Street wandered amiably on seeking to comfort him. The distressed lover's one idea was that of all distracted, and so for the time unreasoning animals, to double back upon their own track, and haunt the spot with which their pain is identified. John had no real reason for going back to the cottage, but it was the point to which he instinctively turned as the point for a fresh start.

And behold! As they turned up the lane, and rapidly covered the ground between them and the cottage, the placid face of the Widow Lane was seen peering anxiously out into the night, holding high the little lamp above her head, framed in the parlor window.

"Heaven be praised! Good-night, Tom," cried Sherwood, joyously, dashing open the little gate and in two strides reaching and entering the door.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" This was Mr. Street's comment, and it must be confessed that the little man was

disappointed. He had been ready to be of assistance, and no help was needed. He had walked half a mile on a cold night for the benefit of a friend, and was not so much as invited inside the door. And perhaps the greatest of his chagrin was in the sad reflection that what might have been a beautiful item was dashed away just as it was itching on the point of his pen.

"Nothing, Mrs. Street, nothing at all!" he said, crossly, to that sharer of his domestic weal and woe. "Sherwood simply made an ass of himself, and was in too great a hurry to find it out. The Widow Lane is at home, and I hope to heaven in bed, where all rational people ought to be."

"Ah, love! love!" apostrophized the philosopher, as he blew out the lamp which had shed light upon his literary labors, "what fools it makes of other people!" With which sage and comforting reflection Mr. Street sought his humble but, as he called it, sufficient couch, and lost himself to the troubles of the world.

Meanwhile, what was the event that had upset the equilibrium of Margaret Lane's lover?

John saw nothing of Margaret that night. He only learned in a lofty tone from the widow that her daughter was safe in her room, and they had been spending the evening quietly with friends. Sherwood was too polite to ask what friends, and possessed no legal rights to inquire into the movements of the dainty maid up-stairs. She was sobbing to herself, softly, in the little white bed, and listening to John's tread as he went, perplexed, to

his own room,—listening, this little forlorn maid, to every sound he might make with a pleasure so vague and yet so keen as to be almost pain.

It was not until the evening after that the widow, going out upon an errand to the decayed store on the corner, left the lovers together, and John was told with many tears of what had taken place the day before.

Upon leaving the Streets, the widow, with some blushing and apparent misgiving, had informed her daughter that Richard Wilton's carriage was to meet them at the door and convey them to his mansion, where they were to dine. It was the first time anything of the kind had happened, but excited no misgiving, and indeed little interest in the mind of Margaret. That her mother's old friend, to whom they owed so much, should have them at his grand house for dinner on Christmas-day surprised the widow's daughter only in that the invitation had never before been given. Her mother's way of telling her excited a feeling of wonder. It was not so wrong a thing, surely, that the widow should falter and blush before her own child in announcing it. On the other hand, it was not so great a condescension on the part of Mr. Wilton that her mother should caution her to be very grateful.

"Umph! I should think not," growled John, as he listened; but then he was a lover.

Arrived at the mansion, Wilton had received them in pompous style, that excited only a feeling of repulsion in this young woman's heart, as she heard him loudly

and coarsely order the servants about. An abundant dinner followed, served with all the grandeur that an experienced and solemn butler could throw about eight courses with appropriate wines. Wilton was nervously vain during and after dinner. He walked with his guests through the large and lofty apartments furnished by a New York artist. If he had been the verger of an old cathedral, or the keeper of a nobleman's castle in the absence of the family, he could not have talked more volubly and statistically.

"This cost so much, that as much again. No expense was spared, widow," he said, exultingly. "Some o' these nobs thinks they have everything better 'n all the rest o' the world. I'll bet my furniture cost more 'n any house in town. I'm a self-made man, but I know what's what. I ain't mean, neither. I paid the bills, though some on 'em were pretty thumping big. But I think o' gittin' married some day, an' I want a nest to hold my bird when I git her, that 'll lay over all the other birds, hey? How's that?" looking past the widow to the daughter, who was getting tired of all this vulgar display, and longed to be back in the little firelit parlor, with some one else beside her, and not her mother either, this undutiful child.

Wilton seemed always to come back to the point of his marriage. He was continually interrupting himself, even in the midst of his most pompous descriptions, to tell how much his wife would have,—what horses, what clothes, what things to eat, what carriages to ride in.

Suddenly an awful suspicion shot through Margaret's mind. Tired with tramping through the rooms and halls, tired of the pictures and decorations, tired most of all with the coarse conceit and self-glorification that ran through the harsh-voiced comments of the owner of all these fine things, she had seated herself in a little recess made by the jutting out of a bay-window, and was waiting for the tour of vanity to be finished. Suddenly the thought came, "Does Mr. Wilton mean to marry mamma?"

A dozen things flashed upon her in substantiation of the dreadful idea. His own care to impress them with his wealth, his inevitable drift of talk bringing all conversation back to the subject of marriage. Margaret's heart almost stood still within her at the thought. She had long been growing to feel that any obligation due this man was hateful to her. Unreasonably so too, for she knew so little of the world as to think it the general rule for a man's friend to take care of his widow and orphan. Much had she thought over this kindness of Wilton to herself and mother. There was no possible theory by which to explain it save the one in which the widow devoutly believed, and which Margaret had always received with the readiest confidence. Indeed, it is possible that this innocent girl had an idea that it was a part of the provision of a noble government for the families of its dead martyrs, some one able to do so being forced to stand *in loco parentis* for them. Perhaps the widow had treasured up old newspapers, and Mar-

garet had read of the patriotic statesmen who fought the battles of their country vicariously, and who sent out regiment after regiment with the solemn promise that the republic would tenderly care for their families.

What if now Wilton were to marry her mother? What if all this parade was to blind the widow's eyes to the coarse face, the stumpy form, the harsh voice, the animal nature of this man? Margaret could not endure the thought. From her mother, and as a child, she had learned to be properly grateful to Richard Wilton. Now, as she sat in the shadows and heard the low murmur of voices at the other end of the room, she began to discover more and more of a shrinking from this man; she was fast growing to look upon him with loathing. What it would be to put him, living, in the place of that shadowy father whose dust was lying away off in the Southland, this appalled her. Thinking of it in trouble and in misery, which, of this kind, had hitherto been strangers to her, the voices had ceased in the distance, and she became conscious that Richard Wilton was standing before her. She half started up, only to feel a detaining hand upon her arm, and to find herself penned in the little recess, her mother out of sight, and Richard Wilton looking at her with the fixedness of one charmed. What she saw in his eyes was so strange that she could not interpret it to herself. She could not know that as she sat there in the shadow, a dainty, white-robed figure, with a little filmy lace about her throat and wrists, her red-gold hair touched with soft warmth from the chande-

lier, that Richard Wilton was looking upon her as one animal looks upon another, and that the glare in his eyes was the sign of animal desire.

He was fascinated by the dainty sweetness of her face and form. He trembled even to touch her arm, but commanded himself to say,—

"How d'ye like it, Margaret? Isn't it as good as any on 'em? Hasn't the poor boy got up pretty well, hey?"

And then, as Margaret made no answer, he went on again. His wife was to have all this, money and house, and diamonds and silks and pictures and servants,—everything. The girl's heart failed her, lowering her eyes before his, and feeling that her suspicions must indeed be true, and that her mother was going to sell their peaceful cottage simplicity for this bold, staring palace and costly display. And then, before she could realize it quite, Wilton was on his knees before her, and pouring out in thick words a story of love for *her*. *She* was his queen, his love, his life, his everything that he could express in language, the hot words tumbling out over and upon each other. *She* was the one, *she*. In fear and shame and dumb terror, Margaret sank back and shrank away from the man. But he was not thus to be put off. "Marry me!" he cried. "Marry me, Margaret. I'm rich, I tell ye. Don't y' understand? It 'll all be your'n, every penny, and I'll make more. I can give ye anything, I will, only you must come here with me. I've been waitin' for you, lookin' at you from

away off long enough. I won't have it no longer. Margaret, you must marry me. D'ye hear? What d'ye mean?" fiercely, as the girl shrank away still farther and vainly endeavored to scream out with lips that would not move. "Ain't I good enough for ye? I'm good enough to support ye, I s'pose. Oh, don't ye squirm like that! You've got to come to it, your mother says so too."

"Mother!" cried the girl, in anguish.

"Yes, mother! She's sensible, she is. She knows what's what, she does. She knows that a million don't come knockin' at a poor girl's door every day in the week. She ain't no fool, she ain't. Don't ye s'pose she's lookin' out for your good well 's I am? Now look here, you girl," he cried at last, the animal leaping beyond the limits of the man. "Jest you look here! I've been lookin' forred to this since you was a pert little girl. I loved ye then; I love ye now; and, mark me, I'll have ye too! D'ye hear? I'll have ye! Your mother knows enough to know that if I *don't* have you she won't have no roof over her head much longer. I'm desp'rate now; you've made me. Your mother wants you to marry me. She kin make ye do it. An' I'm goin' to marry you, Margaret Lane, sure 's this house 's standin' here. When I say a thing I mean it, you'd better come to time."

Wilton left the girl, and Mrs. Lane found her, immediately, in hysterics. As she was taken to the carriage by her mother and a maid-servant, Margaret seemed to throw off a load as she left the shadow of the gorgeous mansion. Not a word was interchanged between mother and daugh-

ter on the homeward journey. The younger woman was so sick at heart, so deadly a chill had fallen upon her, that she could barely say good-night to the trembling woman, who was glad of the silence, and cowered away from the strange eyes of her child. Well might she, for well she knew, even with her narrow intelligence, that she had committed that vilest treason of breaking down the barrier that exists between all innocent womanhood and the evil of the world. It was at her mother's hands that Margaret ate the fruit, in the juices of which, lay the knowledge of good and evil.

It was such a precious story as this to which John listened, with many indignant and pitying interruptions. In deep disgust and anger the young man listened, while in shame and sorrow the young girl spoke, passing over as lightly as possible the widow's share, which, however, was only too evident.

They were not left long together, for the Widow Lane, either from a motherly instinct or sharpened by instructions from Wilton, came back presently and prevented any further *tête-à-tête*. But they needed no words, these two. Each loved and was loved, and each knew it. Yet the problem of how and when was a vexing one. John was poor enough with the little sum he had laid up from his salary as book-keeper. He was growing poorer now every day, as he found no situation, and expenses, which before had been at a minimum, could not be further reduced.

The impending strike would make matters worse, and

the prospect of immediate employment was not very bright. But John was brave as every man is who has the reward of a sweet woman's love before him. Margaret would be true, of that there was no doubt. John drew on the future, as Thomas Street did, though in a far different way. Richard Wilton's declared intention of marrying Margaret and her mother's advocacy of his suit were discouraging, and the shadows looked a little heavier than usual to the stalwart young fellow with his way to carve out, so his thoughts were a little dismal, perhaps, over Sunday.

Others' thoughts were dismal on that Sunday too. Women had used the eloquence of tears and entreaties in vain. The strike was decided upon. Cooler counsels had so far prevailed that a deputation had been sent on Saturday evening to call on the council of mill-owners, who were in session consulting as to their own course. But the deputation went as conquerors who had already won a battle, instead of weak combatants, before a blow had been struck.

"They think too d—d much of themselves, and are too d—d sure that factories were built to be used as hospitals and asylums." This was one comment upon their protest against the reduction.

Indeed, they took a somewhat high tone, demanding this and demanding that, forgetting that they were not actually in a position to demand anything.

So they were curtly told that the owners were quite capable of directing their own business affairs, and noti-

fied that no more committees would be received. The mills would be open and ready to go Monday morning as usual. That was all that came of the ill-contrived deputation, but it was enough to afford fuel for much street-corner declamation and barren oratory all Saturday night and Sunday.

If the employers were troubled they kept the knowledge of it to themselves. If the strike was to affect them pecuniarily, they at least made no immediate reduction in household expenses, while many a pale-faced woman, with bitter memories of former strikes, put her surly master on a two-thirds allowance and went on one-third herself, so that the children might not know. So Sunday drew to a close. The bar-rooms did a rushing business all day, as in such times they always do.

Mark Winthrop wore a sad and troubled face, only lightened as he heard from Phil and Sydney what the latter had been turning over in her mind.

Robert Croft was out all day and a great part of the night, getting ready for what might come.

Many in the city dreaded the dawn of a new day, and the wisest could not predict what it would bring forth.

CHAPTER X.

THE STRIKE.

MONDAY morning came, and at a quarter before six o'clock the bells clanged as usual. As usual, too, the streets were filled with "help." But there was a holiday air in their mien and attire that spoke ill for their industry that day. Crowds hung about the huge gates that opened in the yard before the Tradelawn Mills.

Would the strike amount to anything? was the question on the lips, the thought in the minds of all. Not all of the mill-help of the city were "Union" men. It was the latter who had really planned and forced the movement. But they had artistically covered up their tracks, and the strike was not a "Union" one, but an effort of the whole working population, irrespective of trades organization, to fight against the proposed reduction. The success of the resistance depended upon the holding together of perhaps twenty-five hundred men, women, and children, though practically twelve hundred men were the real backbone of the strike,—as they went the others would follow. Nearly all of these men had set their names to a declaration, drawn up and circulated by Croft's committee, that they would not go back to

work at the reduced rate, nor would any return unless all were received back on equal terms.

It was a bungling contrivance.

Some of the men belonged to great organizations, with treasuries full of money, pledged to back their members in any movement that received the approval of their executive committee. But not all had this resource to fall back upon, and those who had were careful not to let it become a prominent subject of talk. They kept urging the local aspect of the strike, claiming that the mills were overrun with orders, and that in a day or two, as soon as they saw the people were of a really determined front, the owners would be forced to yield. At the most, the street-corner orators, who almost all were sure of a weekly sum from the organization to which they belonged, declared that the affair would be a two or three days' holiday, perhaps a week, then capital would be forced to yield, and labor, having asserted its power and dignity, would resume the apron of service.

So when the bells clanged and the gates opened on that Monday morning, crowds of men, with some of the women, many of the girls, and all of the boys, were on hand. The older ones seriously anxious as to the outcome, the younger taking it as a huge frolic.

In all the mills, except the Tradelawn, about a tenth of the people went in,—sullenly, angrily, but helplessly. A ten per cent. reduction meant misery of course, but low wages were preferable to starvation. Those who thus bowed before the hard necessities of their case were hooted

at, and some stones were thrown. For it seems to be a maxim of the average striker, certainly of most mobs of strikers, that they have not only a divine right to dictate terms for themselves, but also terms for others. Nothing has so hurt the cause of the working-men in their various uprisings, nothing has so withdrawn the sympathy of outsiders, as this determination on their part to prevent other men from taking what they refuse. There are many strikes begun in righteousness and justice, which have so appealed to the public sense of what was right and fair, that the best opinion has been all on the side of labor as against the exactions or extortions of capital, until labor has alienated outside co-operation by refusing to their fellows what they demand for themselves,—emphasizing the refusal by means of physical force.

Nine-tenths of the help stood on the streets, and the remaining tenth gave in without a struggle. But of those who went back to work very few were employés of Wilton. So few, indeed, took their accustomed places in the Tradelawn Mills that they were without occupation and useless. All the other mills save the Tradelawn were enabled to keep up a show of work, and this they did bravely. Mr. Howard Millbank and Mr. Barrows Blackmore, the largest owners next to Wilton, were apparently as cheerful as ever. They met with the others in conclave at Blackmore's office to discuss the situation.

"More stand out than I thought," said one.

"Still the mills are running, and if we do not have to

absolutely shut down, I prophesy that every single day will see the people coming back," said another, who had experience.

"My mill ain't running," growled Richard Wilton. "Not more 'n forty hands out o' seven hundred came in, and they were scattered so in the different rooms that there wasn't force enough to do a stroke, so I shut down."

Polite commiseration met Wilton from the other manufacturers, but it was more expressed than felt. Even these men, bound by the ties of wealth and business interests, did not have anything more to do with Richard Wilton than was rendered necessary by the exigencies of the occasion. The significant fact that he was the only one entirely deserted was an added humiliation which even he felt. In the counsels that followed his voice was for the harshest measures. He would refuse to receive back a single one of the strikers. Men could be gotten in sufficient numbers after a short lapse of time. Let the insolence of the fellows be punished as it deserved.

"Folly," said Mr. Millbank. "We get plenty of men, but not skilled to our work. Besides, if we could fill every place this minute with others, I doubt if it would be quite the thing to do. Not a fourth nor an eighth of the strikers are at all responsible in the matter. They follow leaders like a flock of sheep for all their wild talk of independence of masters. They are ten times the slaves of the wily fellows who work them up to such a

pitch as this than they ever are of us. I feel rather sorry for most of them myself."

"Sorry? I'd like to know what we've got to be sorry about. I say drive 'em to the wall. They don't mind hurtin' us in puttin' back our orders. What do we want to care *what* they think?"

This of course was from Richard Wilton.

"Nevertheless I must be permitted to think for myself, sir," returned Mr. Millbank, loftily, "and I shall go no further than we have already. I think the reduction was necessary on my own part, for my market is overstocked. It's a great pity you consented to a scaling down of wages, Mr. Wilton, if your orders are so numerous that you are pushed to keep up with them."

"You wouldn't have heard it out of my head, I know," said Mr. Blackmore, jocularly, "if the people were crying for silk as they seem to be for the Tradelawn woollens, Mr. Wilton."

"Well, when I can get men for a dollar I don't pay no dollar 'n a half," said Wilton, crustily, seeing that the tide was against him. He could not understand the sentiments of Millbank, Blackmore, and the others. That they were determined for their own interest to keep the stand for a reduction of wages he knew, that there they stopped and refused to drive the strikers out of their houses, or to take any other advantage of their hostile attitude, this was simply beyond Wilton's comprehension. The fact of the matter was, that the other manufacturers were perfectly conscious of their power,

and of their ability to contest the question at issue. The market was overstocked, and a few weeks' or even months' rest would make comparatively little difference with them. Doubtless some of them would lose money for a time even at the ten per cent. reduction. So they could afford to be good-natured, and were far from disposed to embitter the minds of their working-people. They could afford to wait until the strikers came to reason, a thing which strikers are forever leaving out of account. Neither table nor wardrobe would appreciably suffer.

Richard Wilton could as well afford to wait as any of the others, perhaps better, some of them thought, even though his orders were behind. The more fool he, they decided, for entering the scheme at all.

But Richard Wilton's small nature clamored for something more than victory; he would force the workingmen to acknowledge that they were perfectly helpless; he would humiliate them, and craved to witness their humiliation, or else his own triumph would not be complete. Were it not for the storm of indignation he feared from these chicken-hearted employers, who seemed to him not to realize their own rights, he would have evicted every one of his tenants and shut up every striker's house. But the tide of opinion was too strong against him. He stood alone for the course of revenge, which alone he could not carry into effect. So he left the council as it broke up, in a malignant frame of mind, to find what comfort he might in the indulgence of hot brandy

and water in his dining-room, and in the sweet unhampered privilege of consigning his unhappy household to a future abode of misery, from the worst terrors of which the new theology is mercifully endeavoring to emancipate us.

Croft's committee was in session all of the first day of the strike at Carson's Hall. A throng of men coming and going crowded the hall, listening to the speeches which were occasionally indulged in, and asking, restlessly, every other minute, "how things were coming on." All day long the streets were full of the strikers; as night drew on the men, many of them, grew red as to their eyes and thick as to their speech. The saloons throve mightily, for there was a crispness in the winter sunshine that sought counteraction in draughts from the bright bottles and steaming punch-bowls of those true and only friends of the working-men,—the barkeeper and his assistants.

The Reverend Mark Winthrop went alone to his little chapel in the morning, and prayed that all sorts and conditions of men would grow soon to see their relations to each other and be true to them. Later in the day he joined Philip and Sydney Worthington over a cheery dinner-table, which, bright as it was and delicate the fare, did not serve to drive away the gloom that overhung the spirits of hosts and guest.

Sydney was wrought up to a high pitch, and co-operation was her theme, concerning which she found a hearty sympathizer in Mark, while Phil talked as a cynical

unbeliever in all things, and Mrs. Sands was alternately elevated and depressed, quoting her late father as an answer to everything and everybody.

"When can we do it, Phil?" cried Sydney. "Why can we not do something at once as a protest against all this selfishness of the employers and madness of the people?"

"Just as soon, my dear, as the angel of the millennium toots his prophetic horn."

"Oh, Mr. Philip," murmured Mrs. Sands, plaintively, "what will Mr. Winthrop think?"

"It is an unfortunate moment just now, Miss Sydney," said Mark, being appealed to from the unsympathetic brother. "If you actually intend to start a co-operative movement——"

"Which *we* do," interrupted Sydney, with emphasis on the pronoun, which brought a sniff from Phil.

"Well, then, you must wait, of course, until this trouble is over. There is so much excitement that any movement of the kind would be looked upon askance, certainly by the very men we wish to interest in it. It is no time to impress capital with a sense of the rights of labor, when labor is doing all it can to reject sympathy. I hear that some of those who attempted to go to work this morning were attacked by a body of the strikers, and wounds were given. I went to Croft about it, and he said that strict orders had been given against any such thing, but what could the executive committee do? They had no real power to enforce order, and I

fancied, from the way in which he spoke, that the more thoughtful of the leaders feared they had raised a demon they could not lay."

"Shows the quixotism of ever expecting anything decent from those fellows without a lash held over them all the time," growled Phil.

"It shows how neglected they have been, that they run wild now, and do not know how to govern themselves when they should," cried Sydney, in protest. "Once let the roughest of those men be taught the dignity of responsibility, and you will see how quickly they will learn to control themselves."

This young mistress of arts was showing a philosophical insight which caused, just now, the Reverend Mark's heart to throb a trifle more quickly—as philosophy will.

"I agree with you entirely, Miss Sydney," he said, as he thought how very becomingly the dark gown, covered with rich black lace, set off the fine form, the brown eyes, and the royal coronet of brown hair on the shapely head.

"Oh, of course," spryly assented Phil, with an unnecessary exuberance of emphasis. It was philosophic insight that caused the two young people to blush and falter so, of course.

The talk drifted on to a discussion as to what was to come of the strike. Philip was oracularly certain that a week's time would see all the mills running full again, and the newspapers seeking a new sensation.

"By the way, Jack Kincaid came out pretty strong in to-day's paper; did you see it, Mark?" said Phil.

"No; in what way?"

"Oh, for Sydney's fad of co-operation."

"He did? Then he's a man of more sense than I gave him credit for. I should like to *know* Mr. Kincaid," said Sydney, complacently ignoring the hard words she had uttered against the same aspiring journalist in this very room not many days before.

"Yes, it seems that Jack's been cramming up for the occasion. He quoted a column of statistics to prove that the failure of co-operation heretofore was no failure at all, and waxed eloquent over what is to come. Let me get the paper, though." And presently he found and read these words from the *Herald:*

"'A generation has passed since the apparent collapse, and Englishmen who predicted the failure of the application of the Sermon on the Mount to business have now the opportunity of studying the course of events with reference to their prophetic insight. As a result, they find to-day, in the United Kingdom, more than twelve hundred societies legally organized and in active operation, numbering upwards of six hundred thousand members, most of them heads of families, and representing, probably, one-twelfth of the whole population of the Kingdom, with a capital of forty-five million dollars and a net income of ten million dollars yearly. And this is not the whole story. These societies are combined together in one co-operative union. They have

established a wholesale society, which two years ago did a business of more than sixteen million dollars, with a net profit of more than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and which, besides its branches in England and Scotland, has seven purchasing and forwarding depots in Ireland, one in New York, two in France, and two in Denmark, and is the owner and operator of a line of steamships constantly plying between England and the Continent on the business of the society.' "

Sydney listened with sparkling eyes.

"What has been done in England can be done here," she cried. "Now, Phil, won't you? won't you?" Who could resist a woman's appeal, such an appeal at least, and such a woman? thought Winthrop to himself, and he felt in a way hurt at the moderation of Philip's reply.

"Oh, yes, Syd, we'll have to do something, I suppose, or you'll bore me to death."

Presently Mark went away, reluctantly, it must be confessed, to seek the alleged comforts of his hotel.

Would Sydney have been pleased or otherwise to have known that this ardent promoter of the cause of the working-man was thinking a deal more of her own self that very moment, than of this purpose which had lent a new grace to her life and a new dignity to her charms? If Sydney had private thoughts upon any matters not touching upon co-operation, she wisely refrained from giving her brother any hint of them, and of course Philip was in that state of dense blindness and ignorance which is a peculiarity of brothers. The perfume

of the rose in their own gardens gets to be so common that they wonder any one ever cares to pluck it.

Mark went down Main Street thinking (of co-operation undoubtedly), when his attention was attracted to a loud-talking, loud-laughing group of young people coming towards him. It was the evident intention of the party to occupy the whole of the sidewalk, and Mark, with the patient good nature characteristic of the minority under such circumstances, drew aside to let them pass. They did not notice him, while a flaring gas-jet disclosed to him the bold, high-colored features and shining black eyes of Ellen Croft, leaning on the arm of a loudly-dressed man, while behind and accompanying them was another like couple. It was the devoted Jennie, of course, and the gay party was not talking of the strike.

They passed on, shrieking with laughter over some brilliant witticism, the staple of the conversation being "fellers" and "dance," from the words that caught Mark's unwilling ear.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he murmured to himself. "What will be the end of it all?"

Was this Nellie altogether to blame? Answer me, wife of Robert Croft, sitting sullenly there in your silent kitchen. Has your daughter no excuse for meeting men on the street and going about with them to suppers and dances, with no other thought than of a flirtation to pass the time, with no ideal of happiness that does not take the form of a man with his arm about her waist and his hot breath upon her cheek, whirling about the

floors of a dance-hall? Did you not cause it, wife of Robert Croft? You, with your forgetfulness of your own girlhood, your sinking down under the very circumstances that should have spurred you rather to hold up the hands of a husband and throw protecting arms about the form of a daughter. You, with your sullenness and bitter tongue. Your daughter walks the street to get beyond your reach. She picks up acquaintances no pure girl should have. She frequents places no young girl should enter. Whose fault is it, wife of Robert Croft, that your daughter has no companion in her own home?

So Ellen Croft and hundreds like her are becoming daughters of the night year after year. Whose fault is it, mothers? Ask yourselves first before going abroad for reasons.

For a week the strike continued to drag its slow length along. Varying reports of its progress were published from day to day, only the committee, of which Croft was a member, knowing that it was doomed to failure from the third day, when some of the strikers began to yield, and by twos and threes went quietly and humbly to the bosses, begging to be taken back. During that week Carson's Hall rang with a great deal of crude eloquence. In the evenings paid working-men from abroad came to nerve up their brethren to resist the tyranny of capital. These men magnified the strike as one of the great movements that would be bound to bring about reform.

"Only show them organized resistance to organized oppression. Stand firm, and they 'll have to knock under." These were the encouraging words that caused men to nudge each other, and to whisper of hope and defiance, two elements sadly at a discount among them after the exciting first moments of the strike were over.

But the active strikers began to meet with an obstacle now that had never occurred to them as amounting to anything. Women were fast opening their eyes to the fact that it was far better for their husbands and sons to be in the mills, even at a ten per cent. reduction, than to be lounging about the streets, running up scores in the saloons, or growling discontentedly at home. These hard-toiling wives and mothers began to see the difference that a single week's aimless existence had wrought upon the men. For the women saw the very worst of the whole affair. On the street and to each other the men were gruffly cordial, in the saloons they were even affectionate, but after the excitement of the day, and under the influence dispensed in liquid form, they came to the domestic hearth, upon which there was little fire, with good nature exhausted and the residuum of themselves at the disposal of those nearest them. So the women felt the real bitterness and misery of the situation. The Nellies and Jennies and Minnies gave themselves up to the hitherto unknown joys of parading Main Street at all hours of the day as well as in the evening. Many a woman, with a motherly heart and a tender

yearning over the girl she was forced to send into the mill to help out the household expenses, sorrowed over the new boldness that grew upon fair faces and sat unpleasantly on comely features, as a result of the license of undisciplined freedom.

These women, then, who were in heart rebels against the strike in the beginning, grew stronger in their rebellion from day to day. Some of them took refuge in tears; some in sharp tongues, ten times sharpened; some, alas! in drink; some in the patient, uncomplaining silence which is a moving factor, with real men, far more potent than anything else.

At the end of the first week the backbone of the strike was broken, so the newspapers said. Two weeks from the day that the mutinous throng remained outside the mills in holiday attire, the same throng, in working clothes, with tin pails in their hands, were again in motion to and from the factories.

The strike was broken, but some effect remained. A great many of the strikers were not taken back at all. Employers gladly took advantage of such an opportunity of getting rid of shiftless or careless workmen. When such came, with a crowd of others, they were told that the bosses intended now to do a little striking of their own. That class, then, the most dangerous in any community, having nothing to lose and everything to gain by riot and trouble, were left upon the streets, cursing alike their late employers and their late companions as having deserted them.

With few exceptions, the leaders in the strike were taken on again. They were generally the men of brains and some education, who make better workmen, gentlemen employers, than the dull and uneducated. The very causes that bring such men to the front in any movement opposed to the established order of things, make them the best workmen when undisturbed by discontent or a bitter sense of oppression. One of the remedies for bringing about a better state of affairs between employers and employed is not to keep the latter stupid and ignorant.

Croft made no application to be taken back to the Tradelawn machine-shop. He knew it would be useless. He did try at some of the other mills, and, with his long experience and reputation, would have had no difficulty in getting work, but that he was on the "black-list." This was a contrivance of Wilton's during the first days of the strike. Each of the manufacturers was to make a list of the men in their employ who were considered especially "dangerous," and the owners bound themselves to respect each other's list—for mutual protection. To have one's name upon one of these fatal rolls, therefore, was to shut the door of employment in the mills of the city upon the unfortunate one so placed. The first two names on Wilton's list were John Sherwood and Robert Croft.

In the last meeting of the executive committee of the strikers there had been plenty of complaints and recrimination. Accusations of betrayal and selling out were

freely bandied about. But Robert Croft was impatient of such talk and spoke his mind.

"I tell ye, men, it's our own fault. We're cravenly afraid in our hearts of this power of capital. We can't face short rations long enough. We take to drink as soon as we're out o' the mill, an' then the devil is loose. We've no sense to see that we've got to have union among ourselves first before we can compel anything from others. We let men come in from outside who've nothing to lose by what we do, an' incite us to doin' what we oughtn't to do. We lost friends when that fellow Waters led some of our people to attack the men who wouldn't stay out with us. Don't you see, they went in on the very ground we stayed out on? Because they claimed the right to work for what wages they pleased. We couldn't see that, and now we're beaten,—beaten again, with ourselves to blame. The trouble's in the fact that we can't hold together, an' we haven't the money to last, even if we didn't break up among ourselves.

"I'll tell ye when a strike 'll be a success. When some men 'll get together who 'll be willing to starve outright rather 'n take starvation wages. When we get's far as that, an' show people we're striking for life, an' not as most of 'em think, for more pay, then there 'll be some hope for us."

Croft's face was black and his eyes fierce. After twenty years the end had seemingly come for him, and such an end! Knowing what he had to meet with at home, no wonder his step was slow and his face moody

as he left the hall and the other members of the now moribund committee.

The strike was over. The men were beaten and the employers were victorious. But this was not the whole of it. The men went back to their accustomed places, followed by the women and children, with a new sense of injury. The fact of being crushed and trampled upon again was upon them. The feelings that had brought about the strike were still alive, though shut up again in the hot hearts from which they had burst. The roots of bitterness were still alive, though the little shoots that had come to the surface were cut off clean to the ground. The sense of defeat in a just cause was added to the former discontent.

And the employers thought that the strike was over. The mute strike of undisciplined passions was still raging. Every such victory of class over class only adds to the length of the final reckoning.

The problem of poverty was not settled, the problem of labor was not settled, the problem of wealth was so far from being settled that no one had discovered the existence of it *as* a problem.

Wilton was brutally triumphant, though of one pleasure he was deprived. He longed to have Croft and Sherwood come back to him with an application for work. He knew that he had shut them out of immediate employment elsewhere by means of the black-list, but his mean nature pined to wreak its spite in words, and in witnessing the humiliation of the men he hated.

Now that the Tradelawn Mills were running again, and the orders in arrears being hurried forward, the owner of this hive of wealth and industry bethought him that affairs of the heart should receive some attention. His whispered plot with the Widow Lane had been held in abeyance for a time pending a settlement of the strike, and for nearly a month Margaret had seen no more of her would-be lover, while John Sherwood took advantage of his enforced idleness to play the sweetheart.

One evening Margaret and he were seated in the little sitting-room, indulging in long intervals of that blissful silence which is the prerogative of lovers. The widow was busying herself in the next room, not daring to say anything from her timid heart and trembling lips, yet shuddering as she thought what Richard Wilton would say,—the well-known footstep was heard outside, and the widow flew to open the door, making noise enough in her progress to warn the couple in the sitting-room, and exclaiming with nervous loudness, "Why, Mr. Wilton!"

Now the widow herself was so like a hare in its constant state of tremor and flight, that she fancied John Sherwood would fly immediately at the sound of his late employer's voice, and she ushered the latter into the room with some dread, but more hope that the way would be clear. But John bore no resemblance to a hare, and remained comfortably seated in a corner of the fireplace, gazing with undisturbed placidity at the flames, while Margaret arose, a little confused, to greet the visitor.

"Sherwood, you here! What d'ye mean, sir?" was Mr. Wilton's bullying remark, advancing past the discomfited widow and not even noticing the pale loveliness of Margaret, who had risen and was standing near to the centre of the room.

"Mean, sir? What do *you* mean?" flared up the young man, indignantly, starting to his feet and glaring at Wilton. "I am at home, sir, which is more than you can say. I am not in your office to be spoken to like a dog. Mean, indeed! Have you a mortgage on the earth that you speak to a gentleman in this manner? If you want any further information perhaps you will ask Mrs. Lane." And the late clerk, far from being properly abashed, seated himself again, to the inward delight of Margaret, who now said, "Good-evening, sir," and courtesied to Richard Wilton.

The latter had a glimmering of common sense, even in his passion and surprise at thus finding, as he supposed, his suspicions correct, so he turned abruptly away from Sherwood, and, after a clumsy compliment to Margaret, dragged the widow, unwilling enough to go, to the little dining-room beyond. Here, almost pushing her into a chair, he seated himself in front of her, placing his hands on his knees and his legs wide apart, and glared at his victim.

"This is how you keep your word, I s'pose," he began, in a tone that had in it no spark of compassion.

"I'm sure, Richard, I try——"

"You try!" he sneered. "Try what? Try to give

Sherwood every chance he wants to make love to the girl before your very face? Now jest you look here, Widow Lane. I'll tell ye one thing, you've got to git rid of this boarder o' yourn, and dashed soon too, d'ye hear?"

"But how can I? how can I?" moaned the goaded woman.

"Tell him you're goin' to see some friends; that's true enough, I'm sure," with a satisfied grin. "You've been goin' to see friends for a long time, haven't ye? only ye hain't quite got to it yet, ain't that so?"

The widow looked up, nodding faintly and trying to smile, the latter not very successfully. "But how will Margaret take it? how am I to manage her? I'm sure she won't think of such a thing, and somehow she makes me feel as though she was saying what is right when she talks to me; not that I *think* so, really, you know," with a look of anxious appeal at the darkening animal in the face before her. "I'm ready to do anything for her good, you know, and I'll do this."

"Well, it must be done now. I've waited long enough, an' I won't wait no longer. Jest take that in, will ye? If that feller Sherwood hangs round much longer, he'll fool her into not knowin' what's best for herself. Come now, when's it to be?"

A little while longer they talked, this merciless man and the woman, who was a tool in his hands. An admiring tool, though, remembering that to him she had been committed by the loving care of the dead man lying

away off there under the soil upon which he had suffered. A little while they talked in low whispers, while John and Margaret drew closer together in the next room.

"Be true, dear," whispered John; and this dainty maid, who knew nothing of untruth, whispered back that nothing should ever, ever come between them.

Later, when Richard Wilton had gone and Sherwood retired to his own room, the widow tried to bring the subject that lay so heavily upon her heart before the mind of her daughter.

"Margaret dear," she said, as the two parted for the night, "it made Mr. Wilton very angry to see you and John together to-night. You really must not do it again; you really must not——"

"Why, mamma, you know that I love John. What right has Mr. Wilton to interfere between us? what right, I say?" The widow was dumb again, though with a sore pain at the heart.

"I love John; of course I love him;" in a glad tone Margaret repeated these words to herself. It was so simple a thing for the girl to love and to know that she was loved in return, so beautiful and natural a thing, that she wondered everybody was not in love with everybody else. Except her mother, of course, who had sung her love-song, and Richard Wilton, who did not even know the alphabet of love, much less was it possible that he should be touched by its inspiration.

So Margaret sank off to sleep, and much later John Sherwood did the same; but Margaret's dreams were

undisturbed, while John was adding up long columns of figures all night that would not balance, furnishing houses he could not pay for, and facing the problem of love in even a very small cottage, with Margaret to be cared for very tenderly, and a corner for the Widow Lane.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AFFAIRS OF MARGARET LANE.

About this time one afternoon Mrs. Tom Street came to call upon her friend and former pupil, Sydney Worthington. This little wife of the sanguine-hearted Son of Toil, as has been heretofore stated, had failed to secure a very valuable draught in the casting of her net in matrimonial waters, but was striving faithfully to be content with what she had. She, too, had once looked upon marriage as the greatest blessing the universe holds for women; what she thought of it now she confided to no one. It would be too much to say that Mrs. Street was satisfied with life. She and Tom were very far apart. The pair had been going hand-in-hand, as it were, for years, and there was actually nothing enough in common between them to afford even conversation at the dinner-table. Five children, and nothing to say to each other beyond the barest suggestions as to what would be for

breakfast, or a question as to the present price of shoes. Neither acknowledged this wide, unnatural gulf, for Tom was entirely contented and blind to it, while Mrs. Tom was so honestly engaged in keeping it from his knowledge that she felt it was bridged herself sometimes. Tom was occupied with his visions and his hopes, which he confided to his trusting children, Mrs. Tom listening but hearing little. The little woman was by no means gloomy, however, only colorless. She was surprised at herself if betrayed into a smile, and her nervous system actually received a shock if by an unforeseen, and therefore unguarded, event she was made to laugh aloud. Once she said, with a melancholy satisfaction that would have excited Sydney's risibles, had not the simple, sad truthfulness of the remark been so very evident, "I am actually astonished, my dear, ever to find myself pleased and happy at anything."

This afternoon she came to Sydney, and was shown up into the latter's room, where the young mistress sat like a queen in the midst of that tangled mass of bric-a-brac and dainty finery which some women gather about them for the same reason that they put lace on their petticoats and ribbon-bows on their boot-tops. It seems a part of them to impress their love for charming nothings upon everything about them. We men may, and often do, abuse this bent of the feminine instinct, but we are always secretly pleased by it. Perhaps women admire it in other women. Mrs. Street did admire it in Sydney at all events, and the beginning of the conversation was

dictated by the presence of some new trifle lately secured. Then the real object of the visitor's call came out.

"Margaret Lane has been with me all the morning, Sydney. You know she came to school for a little time with you."

"A lovely, little, pale thing is Margaret, too," answered Sydney; "but what is the meaning of this long face, Mrs. Tom? Margaret is not in any trouble, I hope. It does seem so strange that a man like Richard Wilton should be the guardian of such a snowflake as that child. What *was* her father ever thinking of? Of course though he is dead and I mean no harm, but he must have known Richard Wilton, and the idea of making that great, rough, coarse man the keeper of Margaret Lane seems to me like a sin."

"It's that I want to talk with you about, dear. Margaret has had no woman friend in whom she could confide but me, and lately she has seemed so unlike her former self that I took her to task about it, and asked the reason. She would hardly tell me at first, for it seemed so like throwing blame upon her mother. The Widow Lane is a poor, weak thing, if she is a far-off cousin of mine, and any one can twist her round his finger. Since Margaret has grown up it has seemed to her, especially of late, in consequence of something which she will not tell me about, that there is something very strange in the way Mr. Wilton provides for her mother and herself."

"Provides for them? I thought they had a pension."

"Oh, yes; but their pension is not enough to support

them, and Richard Wilton gives more than three-fourths of their support. This is what puzzles and perplexes Margaret. Why should he? They are not related in any way, except that Wilton was a private soldier in Captain Lane's company, which does not make out much of a relationship. When the captain was dying in Andersonville, he committed his wife and child to Wilton's care, making him promise to look out for them and care for them as though they were his own. And I must say that Mr. Wilton has done more for them than many a better man would feel himself obliged to do. He educated Margaret, and has, as I say, almost entirely provided for them since he came back from the war and bought the Tradelawn Mills."

"Does Mrs. Lane say anything or think it strange?"

"Oh, bless you! not for a minute. If you were to go down there to-day, and tell her that Queen Victoria had sent you to take her over the ocean and provide rooms for her in Windsor Castle, she would only say, 'How nice!' and ask you when the steamer sailed. She believes everything everybody says, and agrees with everybody while they're talking with her, and the next minute she would say or believe the very opposite. She does not mean to deceive. She does not know the meaning of the word. She is simply abnormally credulous. So she takes what Wilton says as gospel truth, and asks no questions."

"Has Margaret ever questioned her mother?"

"Only in a roundabout way. She knows it would

distress her to doubt the generosity of her 'benefactor,' as she calls Wilton, even if she could be brought to such a pitch, which is doubtful. It is all right and proper and natural to her. Her only thought is of her dead husband's goodness in providing so kind a friend as Wilton. But Margaret has found out, in indirect ways, that her father and Wilton were never friends, scarcely acquaintances, before the war. Wilton enlisted in his company out of the very gutter. It seems very queer that so soon after the war he should have had so much money, when before it he hadn't a penny, and was only a corner-loafer, working, when sober enough, in the machine-shop."

"Captain Lane was an inventor, or something of the kind, was he not?"

"Never to amount to anything. He was always planning and contriving something, and I believe did make one or two little improvements in machinery that never brought him anything."

"What does Margaret think now?"

"She came to me yesterday in real distress, saying that she could not depend on Mr. Wilton's bounty any longer, and asked me to help get her some scholars for a little private school. Ever since Christmas she has been as worried and fidgeted as I never saw her before. She seems to be afraid of Wilton, and declares that as soon as she can get a few pupils she will tell her mother plainly how she feels about being dependent on a man upon whom they have no real claim. Her scholars, with

the pension money, she hopes, will support them, even if they have to leave the cottage, which Wilton owns. She would rather, she says, live in a single room, and be rid of the dependent feeling she now has."

"And very right for her. We must get her the children, Mrs. Tom. I know lots, I'm sure. Why, it will be lovely." And Sydney fell to scheming ways and means.

One thing led to another in Sydney's brain, so that, when her brother was seated opposite her at the dinner-table, with mild Mrs. Sands between, she was full of a mysterious subject, which Phil saw would be confided to him without any exertion on his own part. A woman with a plan or a secret is very like an ostrich for concealment. Presently Sydney asked, "Did you know Mr. Wilton, Phil, before he came here to live?"

"Hardly, my dear, as he has always lived here."

"Why, I thought he came here when he bought the Tradelawn Mills."

"He then emerged into the full social blaze which so eminently adorns and beautifies him, Miss Worthington. I remember him, faintly, before the war, as a dweller in gutters and a habitant of saloons."

"But how did he get enough money together to buy those mills?"

"Perhaps he was a sutler, instead of holding the less lucrative position of a private in the ranks."

"But he was a prisoner with Captain Lane at Andersonville."

"Very true. I had forgotten that even sutlers sometimes met their deserts."

"Oh, dear! this is very trying."

"What, my esteemed sister?"

"Why don't you tell me what I want to know?"

"If you will impart a trifle of illumination upon the subject, if only so far as to give me a faint glimmer of knowledge as to what you want to know about, I will be glad to relieve your anxiety."

"I want to know how Richard Wilton made his money."

"Excuse me for hinting, in the most delicate manner in the world, that possibly it is no actual concern of yours. At least Wilton might adopt that prejudiced view."

"I have a very good reason for asking, sir," said Sydney, in a tone of injured dignity.

"Oh, I beg pardon! That would make the question entirely satisfactory, even to Wilton himself. Now, may I make myself so bold as to ask why you are so consumed with sudden anxiety to know the sources of Wilton's wealth?"

"I do not believe that he came by it honestly."

"You have a rude and blunt manner with you, young woman. Would you deprive the present generation of its chief and most approved manner of accumulating to itself goods and chattels? How can any man pile up a huge fortune in two or three years with strict regard all the time for the moral and legal rights of his fellow-men? The thing's impossible."

"This is all away from the point to which I have been trying to bring you for half an hour. What do people say about Richard Wilton's money?"

"They recognize the fact that it is a pretty good thing to have, that he has it, however he may have come by it, and prudently ask no questions."

"Does no one ever think it queer that a man who had nothing, suddenly, by no visible means whatever, appears with huge money-bags, with enough in them to buy out and run the largest mills in the city?"

"You are straying as to the facts in the case, my dear. It is perfectly well known how Richard Wilton filled those huge money-bags. He filled them out of his head."

"Out of his head? Don't be silly, Phil."

"Don't tease her any more, Mr. Philip," pleaded Mrs. Sands, who never drank black coffee, and was longing for her after-dinner nap.

"Tease? I am teasing no one," said Phil, in an injured tone. "What I say is literally true. Richard Wilton invented certain machinery. He sold one of his patents for a very large sum of money, with which he bought out the Tradelawn property. Since then he has put in a great deal of new machinery, with improvements of his own, and has been gathering a harvest of dollars. It's all very simple, I'm sure."

"Simple or not, there is something odd about it," answered Sydney. "Why did not he show some signs of this wonderful inventive power years upon years ago?

How does it happen that, all in a minute, a mere common laborer performs such magic?"

"Extreme youth would have militated against the display of genius very many years ago," continued the obdurate Philip. "And as for being a mere common fellow, we are given to understand now, that Socrates, in his palmiest days, sojourned about the street-corners in tattered garments, which were the subject of audible comment on the part of the younger and more depraved portion of the Athenian population."

"Oh, bother!" cried Sydney, irrelevantly. "We must do something for Margaret Lane, though."

"Ah, a change in the wind. And what, may I ask, is the pressing need with regard to Margaret Lane?"

Then Sydney confided to her brother the burden of Mrs. Street's afternoon chat, and Philip submitted to promise that he would use his influence in getting Margaret scholars.

"You will turn me into a city missionary yet," he said, pathetically, as he rose to go to the library for a cigar. "I find myself not only engaged in chimerical plans for the elevation of the masses, but now as the aider of virtue in distress. You have insinuated dark suspicions against a respectable and wealthy fellow-citizen, in a mind as naturally as pure and free from guile as a child. What next will come I know not. You may bring me to the last point of marriage, and force me to become a vestryman. My cup will then indeed be full."

Philip went out with a careworn air, while Sydney laughed lightly and threw him a kiss, which the monster scorned to notice.

Meanwhile, John Sherwood, coming home to supper, found the following note upon his table:

DEAR MR. SHERWOOD,—Margaret and I have gone to spend some weeks with friends, and the cottage will have to be closed. Please excuse the haste of this, but of course you will have to find another boarding-place, and we are so hurried that there is no time for more. Margaret wishes me to say that she has been foolish, and now says good-by.

Yours truly,

EMILY LANE.

P.S.—Lock the front door, please, and leave the key at Mrs. Stone's store, on the corner.

E. L.

This was all, but quite enough to afford food for thought to a young man who was a lover. Deprived in a moment of a home, of love, with night fast falling, and with no idea of which way to turn,—this was discomforting enough. But add to this the dark suspicions which at once arose in Sherwood's mind, in which Richard Wilton was a central figure, and we may faintly imagine his state of mind when, having summoned an expressman for his trunk and obediently left the key at the designated store, he stood outside the door, thinking,

first, of a lodging for the night. Homes are not to be had for the asking, but food and shelter may almost always be had for their equivalent, more or less fair, in money. John finally gave the expressman the address of Winthrop's hotel, and turned his footsteps in that direction.

Here he met the young clergyman, to whom his thoughts had naturally turned as an adviser in his trouble.

"What does it mean, do you think, sir?" he asked, anxiously, as he explained the state of affairs and showed the widow's note.

"It may be very strange or very natural, according to circumstances," answered Mark. "Do you know whether the widow has any relatives or friends living away out of town? I gather from this letter that she expects to be away for a length of time."

"None that I know of, and none, I think, exist. Margaret once told me that they were alone in the world, except one or two very distant relations. Tom Street's wife is some connection, I think; but they would not have gone there, I am sure."

John, it must be admitted, was a trifle ashamed to go to the Streets with his story, having but so lately disturbed the serenity of that household, and led forth its main prop and stay upon a wild-goose chase at nearly midnight. Somehow John felt that Tom's sympathy would be comparatively cold a second time, even with the bait of an "item."

"Go there, by all means, John; go to-night," urged Mark. "Nothing can be lost by it, and something may be gained. I can't help thinking that the whole matter seems strange and unnatural. Yet what can be done at present, save to inquire and to wait, I am sure I do not know. If they had disappeared without leaving any word or trace behind, the matter would have been different. As it is, my dear fellow, sorry as I am for your anxiety, I hardly see how we can go behind the face of the widow's letter to find plots and abductions. I think you must take Mrs. Lane at her word, find a new boarding-place, but keep the old spot warm in your heart for Margaret."

"And yet, sir, I know that Richard Wilton is at the bottom of this, however queer it may seem to you to say so. You know what happened at Christmas. When his mind is set on anything, wild horses will not drag him from his purpose. He has cast his evil eye on Margaret, and he can use her mother as he chooses. He is bound to have her, by fair means or foul, and unless some one interferes, he will accomplish his end. Now, I propose to interfere the moment I have the faintest trace of reason. He won't be long in giving me that, for an animal such as he must play with his bone before other people to enjoy the fullest satisfaction. I meet him every two or three days now at the bank. We will see."

And the young fellow started off grimly, beating the pavement with his cane, and having wild thoughts of

revenge, mingled with soft and warm thoughts of the dear heart he longed to feel close to his own.

And Margaret was in a beautifully carved bed, hung with silk and lace, sobbing bitterly, and wondering what would come of it all. And her mother was in the next room, thanking heaven for the good fortune that had fallen upon her in these last years of her life. The widow's heartfelt prayer that night was that her dear Margaret would not stand in her own light, but listen to reason and act like a dutiful child.

If there is an element of humor in heaven, as why not? what must be the thought of the All-Father, as the ever-listening ear catches, in one moment, the prayers that rise constantly at cross-purposes?

CHAPTER XII.

SOME FRUITS OF THE STRIKE.

SOME one has made the astonishing, though, as we are bound to believe, scientifically accurate statement, that every blow upon the earth, be it even so slight as that of a foot stamping, displaces the material atoms of the whole. If this be true, and in these days we are seemingly bound to accept everything as true that falls from scientific lips, you and I can literally move the world every time we go out walking.

The moralist takes this fact (or supposition) of physical science to illustrate a like truth in the spiritual world. Let this world, he says, receive a shock at any point, and the whole is affected. One sin breaks the whole law. We cannot extract any comfort, then, from the fact that our sin is a very little one, for every slap in the face or box on the ear tingles through the whole body, and produces an effect beyond the mere point of contact.

Now granting all this to be true, and far be it from us to differ from scientists and theologians, especially in the few points where they are willing to acknowledge a grudging agreement, the same law must hold good throughout the universe. Battles affect not only single campaigns and armies, but the final result of war, and the affairs of nations. One struggle for liberty touches not only the local questions involved in one little corner of the world, but spreads in ever-widening circles (not to be too original) impinging upon, and so influencing all society.

All movements that involve general principles displace not only the atoms of original contact, but all atoms which can be shown to be connected with the given principle.

The shrewd reader has long ago perceived that the strike against a reduction of wages did not spend its full force in the two or three weeks it lasted. Its effects were not even confined to strikers and employers. Customers of the Tradelawn Mills were provoked and disgusted

beyond measure at finding their orders delayed, as they thought, unnecessarily. Some went so far as to threaten suit against Wilton, holding that he was legally as well as morally bound to continue on such terms with his help as to enable him to keep the contract he had made for the delivery of goods. If this involved any retrenchment or pecuniary loss on his part, that was his lookout, and something he was bound to take into account before he made business promises.

This, however, is somewhat beside the mark. The greatest effect of the strike, after its ineffective protest against the oppression of capital, was in the seeds of discontent and smothered revenge it had sown and left to mature. The yielding of the operatives was not the killing, but the scotching of the snake. Most of the strikers went back to work, having made their protest, and suffered a little for their principles, almost good-naturedly. But many who were received back, and all who were not, felt that their failure obliged them to do something further.

One of this number was Robert Croft. Naturally an even-tempered man, he had been roughed by the tongue of his wife to a point which the events of and following the strike intensified. Left to himself, he would have mourned in his quiet way that there should be such a difference of position and opinion, on so vital a matter, between employer and employed. He would have nursed the thought in sadness but not in sullenness. He was not left, however, to fight the battle in his own

way, and to conquer his dissatisfaction after his own manner. In all the painful years, from the time when Mrs. Croft concluded that she was leaning on a broken reed, so far as hope of greater prosperity was concerned, this woman, who had sworn to love and obey this man, had not failed to rebel against him. She had to his face denounced a state of affairs which it was certainly out of his power to alter. The strike had brought matters to a crisis, and the devil that sleeps in every man's breast had been awakened in Robert Croft.

Pursued by the malice of Richard Wilton, he had failed to find work. It was only through a pressure brought to bear upon the mill-owner, by the influence of Winthrop and Worthington, that he had not turned the ex-foreman out of his house. The little store of money Croft had laid up by painful saving and scrimping was fast disappearing. Ellen's small wages barely sufficed to put the meanest food upon a table that had never been too plentifully supplied, and even these wages were hardly wrung from the girl, who thought herself unfairly treated.

In this state of affairs it may be imagined that Robert Croft did not do his moping at the domestic hearth. Tears that had in them no pathos, and words that bore nothing but bitterness, were small comfort to him, and for the first time in his life he sought the inspiration of cheap drink, and smoked his pipe with such companions as he might find in the saloon.

The "Ivy" was the name of a bar-room, or in more

refined language, a "sample-room," which had been a sort of secondary headquarters for the leaders of the strike, and here Croft found his way one evening after the semi-monthly gathering of the Sons of Toil. The hour was late, but the leaves of the "Ivy" were by no means curled.

For the frequenters of this resort the evening was yet young, and a goodly throng hovered about the bar in various stages of joy and gladness. Croft pushed through this assembly, and found himself with half a dozen other Sons of Toil in the little room, half parlor, half smoking-room, where the landlord and his assistants were wont to refresh themselves in private, when a relaxed thirst on the part of the public allowed them a brief respite.

Two months previous to this, Robert Croft would have shrunk from any intimacy with the men whom he found gathered about the little table of the Ivy parlor, playing cards. But in that two months he had been learning a few hard lessons, and he was almost ready now to graduate from the college of despair.

The surpliced priest finds many a tragedy in history, by means of which to draw tears and repentance from his congregation. But the actual tragedies that throb and burn under the smiling or indifferent faces in this prosaic and materialized year of grace are numberless. Croft had reached a point when life seemed an utterly barren and worthless thing. His wife had destroyed his home, his daughter was an embarrassment rather than a

help. Whichever way he looked, the clouds hung low and black. With no employment he must go on getting deeper and deeper in debt, until credit was gone, and then he must seek aid from the town. His life had come to this. There was absolutely no work for him in the city. He had gone from one place to another, descending in the plane of effort each day to a lower than the day before. Once he had heard a smug orator declaim that any man who really wanted to work could find work to do. Now as Robert Croft walked the streets day after day, begging for any kind of employment, he thought grimly of this, and wished that the well-paid lecturer could stand in his shoes for a few hours.

He began to find out that this was one of the many lies with which society satisfies itself for a state of affairs which is a burning and horrible shame upon our civilization,—men and women going to the devil and all his works every year, who would gladly have gone in the opposite direction had they but the means.

What says the City to Robert Croft, shut out from his trade by the power of a wealthy enemy, seeking any kind of work if so be that he may not starve, nor "go on the town"?

Croft says (and the voice in which he says it is growing louder every year), "Give me something to do. I had rather work than be idle. I do not wish to be a pauper, nor to have my family grow up paupers. Give me work."

"By no means," says the City (or the government which we swear as good citizens to uphold and protect as we ought. "We have money for you, and poor-houses for you, but we have no work. We will gladly pauperize you and your family. We will endeavor by our benevolence to kill every instinct of self-respect in you. We will make the feelings of your children callous to the scorn of men, that they may be enabled to grow up into very respectable tramps and paupers, hanging upon the outskirts of society by means of our alms and soup-kitchens. Possibly we may succeed in brutalizing them so that the State will provide for them in jails and penitentiaries; but as to giving work to able-bodied men, that is entirely beyond our province. You may have your choice, starve, steal, or go on the town. The public treasury is not a fund to provide men with an honest livelihood. That is an altogether too radical proposition, to think that the State should attempt to preserve the independence and self-respect of her citizens. The State is proud, however, to brand charity upon their brows, and willingly sends the taint of pauperism tingling to the finger-tips of the third and fourth generation."

Of course, Robert Croft was not philosopher enough to see that the laws of political economy would be seriously infringed by the encouragement of manliness rather than dependence, but he felt that something was wrong somewhere, and on the evening in question in the Ivy parlor was gathered a group of dubious-looking re-

formers who proposed to themselves the setting of things aright.

Some of these malcontents were men who worked daily, but were dissatisfied with either the quality of their work or the amount of their wages. Others of them were worthless fellows, who evaded work in every form as a curse upon humanity which it was their duty as men not to encourage. Still others, like Croft, had grown desperate by hopes long deferred, whose debts were increasing and credit proportionately decreasing. The tow was ready in such a gathering for firing at any moment.

"Bring in some whiskey, Dan," called out Croft to one of the bejewelled bartenders, who poked his head through the little door that led from the parlor to the Ivy bar.

"C'rect," was the laconic response, and presently the cards were thrown aside to make way for glasses, a bottle of whiskey, hot water, and for the dainty, sugar.

"Now don't let any one else in, Dan," said Waters, the longshoreman; "we're talkin' business."

Dan bowed with that mixture of fellowship and obsequiousness characteristic of his order, and withdrew.

"Now, men, let's settle somethin'; we've talked enough. Let's see if we're up to anything else 'n talk. Who's for goin' the whole figger?" Waters was the speaker.

"What d'ye mean by the whole figure?" asked Croft, half sullenly. "Speak out!"

Hall rose and went to both doors, the one leading behind the bar, the other into the public room, and, finding them close shut, returned to the table, where his companions were waiting silently, stupidly, afraid of their own thoughts, afraid of what was coming, shrinking inwardly, most of them, at the idea which was in the minds of all, and which they scarcely dared to formulate.

"Richard Wilton's house, that's what," said Hall, in a low whisper, yet fatally distinct to every man there. "Curse him, I say! We built it for him. We filled it for him. It's our right to have some of it, or to take it away from him. He's worse 'n ever since the strike. Takes a cursed mean advantage o' the help that stayed out. On'y yesterday Jim Barrow wanted a change o' work from one room to another. Jim's got consumption, the doctor says; an' if he don't git out o' that room, where the air is all the time full o' bits o' stuff flyin' around that git into his throat an' choke him, he'll die blamed soon. So he asked Wilton if he'd move him into a room where the work wouldn't hurt him. What d'ye s'pose the hog said? He said his mill wasn't no dashed hospital, an' if Jim didn't like his work he could strike again; he wasn't bound to take care o' men what had lungs that wouldn't work. That's all Jim got, an' it's all any man 'll get as asks any favor o' Richard Wilton." Here followed a choice and varied assortment of oaths, to further mark and emphasize the speaker's disgust.

"Then he keeps naggin' away at the men, jeerin' us in a sly way o' his. I'll swear he came near to gittin' my shovel 'longside his ugly red head to-day. He'll git it, too, or somethin' worse, some day, too;" and this thought was so sweet and consoling that Hall stopped long enough to dwell tenderly upon it, and to moisten it with a draught of steaming hot whiskey and water. Then he resumed, while the others listened eagerly, and Croft only showed the faintest signs of disapproval.

"I say we've stood it long enough. We're bound to git what's our own; an' if we can't do it, why, we're more bound to make Dick Wilton know that he ain't so durned almighty as he thinks he is 'cause he cheats us an' grinds us down. I know lots o' men who'd join in doin' somethin' to make Wilton feel that he ain't got the best of us yet by a long shot, though we've had to go back workin' for less wages 'n 'll support us."

"You ain't said yet what you mean," interrupted Waters, the longshoreman, who, while he did not feel any of the results of direct contact with Wilton, was inspired by a laudable ambition to assist in any great enterprise for the assertion of the rights of labor over the arrogant and purse-proud oppression of capital.

Hall glanced at Croft with a significant sweep of his hand towards the rest, as he said, "Make Wilton feel 'at we mean business."

"Don't be a fool, Hall; say what you mean," burst out Croft, angrily, feeling that he was the wet blanket

of the occasion, and rebelling against this idea, as inconsistently he was secretly rebelling at his associations.

"Well, I don't mean nothin' bad. My plan's this. I want to frighten Wilton so bad that he'll git some sort of an idea that we ain't the fools he takes us to be, to set down under his cursin' an' reducin' o' wages. I want to scare him bad, an' let him know without bein' able to put a finger on a single one of us that it's his own help a-doin' it. Now I've a plan I'll tell, if you'll all swear to keep it mum. Them as don't want to go in needn't, but they've got to keep their mouths shut." Here he looked with a suggestive half frown at Croft, who was shading his face from the light and not looking at the speaker.

"If you mean me, Hall, you needn't take so much trouble to let me know it," said Croft, hastily. "I'm not a spooney nor a tell-tale. If I could throttle Wilton safely, I'd do it in a minute. One thing I won't do, though,—I won't bite off my nose to spite my face. I'm not a thief, so I won't steal, even if I starve. I won't get into the hands of the law for any wild plan o' yours. Now tell us fair and plain what you mean."

"Well, then, I mean to set fire to Wilton's fine new house."

"That's arson, and means State's prison," responded Croft, much more quietly than the other had thought possible, while from the rest arose an eager, impatient cry of disappointment.

"We can't do it."

"Thought you meant only to frighten him."

"We're not jail-birds."

"You're all fools, that's what you are," growled the stoker. "I don't mean to burn his house down, an' I don't mean that any one 'll be caught settin' fire to it. I just mean to put it in a blaze that 'll frighten Wilton, an' make him see what we can do, without burnin' the house up. The firemen 'll get on to it as soon as it blazes. We'll take care o' that, an' we'll take care to let Wilton know that unless he acts more like a white man an' less like a nigger-driver that somethin' worse 'll happen to him."

All eyes were turned upon Croft. So it is always that the steadiest-charactered man is the one to whom even bad men look up in an emergency.

"I'll not have a hand in it," he said. "I tell you, Hall, you're the fool, not us. We're not going to gain anything by burning houses. I won't split if you really go into this thing; but I'll not join it, that's flat, and I advise the rest o' you to drop the whole business."

For a moment it seemed as though this better counsel would prevail. So long as evil presented itself in merely an abstract form to these men, who were only low-minded and coarse in feeling, not actually criminal, they were eager and ready enough to nourish it; but when once it became crystallized into an actual, tangible form, then their fears, if not their better feelings, took the alarm, and they paused.

But not for long. It may have been in response to Hall's crafty hint that no real harm would after all be done, and that the firemen were sure to save the house, that they were influenced. Certain it was that Croft was forced to listen, half abhorrent, half fascinated, to a detailed plan for setting fire to the mansion of Richard Wilton upon the ensuing night. He did not attempt any further argument against the projected plan. He felt, indeed, a secret, gloating satisfaction in the fact that it would be carried out,—that his revenge would be accomplished, although not by his own hand. Once launched by agreement and serious consultation, the plot was quickly laid. Each man had his part assigned him. Hall and Waters agreed to fire the building, while the others were to keep watch and stand ready to effect a retreat or rescue, as circumstances demanded.

At midnight the polite and gentlemanly dispenser of drinks thrust his head within the door, and, with a yawn which he took small pains to conceal, announced that the hour for closing had arrived.

The men dispersed, each as though afraid to be alone with his thoughts, seeking a companion for the homeward way. Croft alone disdained companionship, not feeling called upon to keep his conscience company by the knowledge of premeditated guilt. A rendezvous had been appointed for the next night, on which the conspiracy was to be carried into effect.

"You won't come with us, then, Croft?" asked Hall,

sullenly, and a little anxiously, as the men stood for a moment outside the Ivy door.

"No, I won't! It's the curse of the whole business that brings men to doing evil that good may come. But I won't split, depend upon that. Wilton can look out for his own property for all me. I'm not his private detective. Let him look out for himself. All the same, you're a fool, Hall, an' the others are bigger fools, to be led by you. You run a big risk, an' you won't gain anything. So go it, an' go to the devil if you want; a few years more or less won't make much difference to him or you, I dare say." And Croft turned away.

"Curse him for a coward, I say!" muttered the disappointed stoker, as he linked arms with Waters.

"But will he split, d'ye think?" questioned the latter, anxiously, gauging the steadfastness of Croft by his own, as men are apt to do.

"No, he won't do that; an' if he does, or weakens like, to make me think he's goin' to, why——" he said no more, but made a gesture of threatening. Then these two worthies turned to a more interesting subject. They were not squeamish, these two. They might lead the others on to a blind following of their own plans, under pretence of frightening Wilton, or perhaps damaging his property a little, but Hall and Waters had long before graduated from the primary school of evil. They knew that the next day but one was pay-day at the Tradelawn Mills, and that on the evening of the proposed firing of his house Mr. Richard Wilton would

probably have in his possession the tidy sum of about ten thousand dollars. Revenge was well enough for milksops, but men would be satisfied with money; and it was the ten thousand dollars that was to cause the scratching of matches about the Wilton mansion on the succeeding evening.

It was the miserable consciousness of the crime to be attempted that caused Robert Croft to pass a feverish, restless night, and a wearisome, slow-moving day, after that evening in the Ivy sample-room. Once or twice it came over him to go to the meeting of the conspirators that night, to urge them into giving up their plan, under threat of lodging information. But he knew he would be unsuccessful, and that thing which men call honor would have kept him from betraying his late associates after listening in confidence to their schemes and swearing secrecy. So he slunk about the streets, and went home at last, hating himself, cursing Wilton, angry with the plotters, of whom he felt himself to be one.

Went home to find—what?

The woman who had once been so close to his heart, who had borne in pain and fear his child, her face now white with passion, her voice strident with anger, cursing her husband and her child. The wife of Robert Croft stood in the middle of the mean little kitchen floor, staring at a bit of paper in her hand, and talking on as though to herself, not noticing the entrance of her husband. The woman's spare form was erect, the lines of her face were hard, her dull eyes burned cruelly.

"A child of shame!" she cried, with almost pathos in the hard bitterness of her tone; "a child of shame! My daughter, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! A huzzy who has sold herself to folly, gone out from my house a Jezebel! Left *me* for *that!* And this is the end! I am come to it at last. Shame! shame! shame! My curse upon you, Ellen Croft! My curse go with you out into the black night, not blacker than your soul! My child you are no longer,—a drab! a harlot! Out of my heart, with your bold face, as you've gone out o' my house!"

"For God's sake, woman, what raving is this?" burst out the astonished man. "Ellen, where is she? Stop your foul tongue long enough to answer me. What d'ye mean? What is this?"

A fear that almost choked his utterance made the man draw back a little, while yet the passion was upon him to speak. At the first sound of his voice the wife turned slowly towards him. She laughed aloud, laughed with a ring in its sound that made Croft shudder even in his hot excitement.

"Take it! read it! You're her father; you brought her into the world. But for you she would not have been a shame to me this night. Oh, I do not curse the day of her birth as I do the day I married you, like the fool I was!" Not a tear fell from the woman's eyes, but the dry sobbing was heard worse than tears, and the wild, nervous shriek which is the mark of the animal rising above the rational being. She extended the

crumpled bit of paper to her husband, with a snarl forcing it upon his unwilling hand,—unwilling, yet fascinated, as men are, to see what will sear their eyeballs.

The paper read,—

"Mother, you've bin little of one to me. If you'd been more, I wouldent go as I go now. I wish for pa I had not said I'd go. But that's to late. I Hate this house, I hate this Work, I hate every thing whitch makes me diffrent from the girls whitch have all they want. My man who I go with loves me. he won't scold. he will giv me All I Want. i shall be happy now, whitch I never was at home. dont Look for me. You told me once that I would go This way & that when I did, never to come back. i don't want to come back, remembor that & you Sent me.

"NELLIE CROFT."

Even in the moment of writing such a note the girl felt the pulse of her small vanity, and could not bring herself to use the common name of Ellen, which she had learned to despise as a type of the low life in which her lot was cast.

"My God! Oh, my God!"

The first burst of the man's grief was terrible. He dropped the paper to the floor, and fell into a chair with his face in his hands resting upon the table. His little Ellen! Oh, God, was it possible? The little tender

thing he had once been so proud of. The baby face he had watched so lovingly, so eagerly, for the first look of recognition from its childish eyes. His Ellen! The sweet messenger of years ago, from beyond that awful border of destiny, lying open only, in joy, to the sacrament of love. Gone now from under his roof, so poor and humble a roof he thought, yet all he had, and the outcome of a life's hard work. To-night she had gone out from that roof which at least gave safe shelter,—gone out to what?

For a little space there was dead silence in the room. Mrs. Croft stood still where her husband had found her. The man lay across the table like one dead. The pity of it all crushed him. Just now he had forgotten everything in the father's great longing to hold the baby girl in his arms once more and hug her close to his safe bosom. The pity of it for her! The blackness before her of which she could not know. This was the father's first burning thought. She was his child. Perhaps for a moment he prayed with the dumb prayer of a dead heart to an unknown God. She was his child, yet his arm could not save her now.

"Well!"

Was this woman a mother? Had she borne the pain of bringing into the world a child,—she whose voice was the voice of a mocking devil, while the child was sinking into a pit that destroys not the body only, but with it the soul.

"Well!"

The sharp voice cauterized the bleeding wound of Robert Croft, and he sprang to his feet confronting his wife. Twenty years had failed to reveal them to each other, and the gap was broadened and deepened now by the twenty years of intimate ignorance.

"Oh, you devil in woman form!" he cried. "Laugh on now at your work! For it is yours. God help you as you stand there without a single mother's instinct in you. I could have borne it. I *have* borne it, but you could not spare your child. She says true." He pointed to the paper on the floor, and the shadows changed frightfully upon his working face.

"You sent her out. You gave her over to this shame. You did it, woman, with your tongue of fire. You could not give her a minute's peace. You goaded her as you've goaded me. An' now you've got your reward. Oh, but that it 'ud be too good for you, I'd choke you as you stand there! Don't fear," he sneered, as for the first time in twenty years the woman recoiled from the man she had bullied and despised. "Don't fear that I'll lay a hand upon you. You'll live for all me, live to know there are some things worse than day-wages. Live, you devil! for a thousand fortunes I'd not keep you from the suffering you've brought on yourself an' me. I've sheltered you an' worked for you, an' for *her*," with a great sob. "I've slaved to do the best I could; I've pinched an' scraped myself; I've borne your reproaches; I've felt your contempt, an' I've stood it, because I believed in God in some fashion, and thought that in

the end even *you'd* be satisfied. I've listened to your ravings at my meanness, when I've been hungry for the food I didn't dare eat for fear you'd lack something. I lived an' worked an' suffered on, sick at heart an' sick in body. While *you*, you forgot your husband, forgot your child, forgot everything but a mean wish to ride in a carriage an' dress in better clothes. Your tongue's cut often an' deep, may it last long enough to curse your own soul! You've laid everything to my fault. But *this* you can't. Your child's voice accuses you out of the carrion pit you've sent her to. You sent her where she is; you lashed her to it with your devilish tongue. To-night she's lost. Gone! my Ellen, gone! May the curse of heaven fall heavy upon you! You've made your daughter a harlot! Let me go now and fill the cup a little higher. Out o' my way!" And with a curse the man dashed his wife to the floor, and fled out into the night, leaving her insensible.

Early in the morning, in that dismal half light so ghastly as it falls on mean surroundings, Robert Croft returned to his home, returned with bloodshot eyes and blackened hands, returned with a shadow of fear on his dark face,—with the consciousness that he was a thief.

CHAPTER XIII.

RICHARD WILTON HAS A VISION AND THE DIGNITY OF LABOR IS ASSERTED.

It was quite late on this very evening that Richard Wilton retired to his library. With a brandy-bottle and glass standing at his elbow, he sat down before the blazing fire to think. Not often did he do this. Habitually alone as he was out of mill hours, he by no means enjoyed his solitary grandeur. He disliked to think, and had no resource in the elegantly-bound books that lined the walls. The rich calf and morocco backs with their lettered titles, this was all he knew of the costly library of which he was as grossly proud as of all his belongings. They represented so much money; this was his keen satisfaction, and to him a very great one.

To-night he was thinking less than usual even of his literary surroundings. He lounged uneasily in the luxurious chair. He drank occasional gulps of brandy. He smoked a cigar fitfully, not enjoying it, but following the habit, biting and chewing the end in his mouth, and relighting again and again with the nervous persistence of a man acting mechanically and under force of custom.

Finally he rose and went to a small safe set into the solid masonry of the wall, and took from it a dull-looking, old-fashioned, japanned tin cash-box, which he

placed before him on the table and opened. The contents were two or three bundles of papers tied up with faded red tape. These he did not remove, but sat down before them, looking at them as one fascinated. Now he mumbled more nervously at the end of his cigar, and took a deeper gulp of the brandy.

The firelight flashed up now and then in that fitful, uncertain way which makes one close the eyes rather than face it. The cold, steady rush of wind about the house corners, the low hum of the draught in the fireplace, the slow-working fumes of the brandy he had taken,—all these combined to throw a spell over the body of the man, whose mind was seething and working, and trying to hide from itself.

Perhaps he fell asleep, afterwards he could not tell whether he had or not; but as he lay back in his chair the scene before him died away and another, quite unlike, took its place. A scene that thousands yet living will never forget did Richard Wilton look upon now.

A dozen years were blotted out and hundreds of miles traversed. There was a great crowd of men within a stockade-enclosed plain, covered with low hummocks and sand-hills, and through it a brackish sulky stream that never ran, but trickled. Such a crowd and such a place! Groups of ragged men with hollow eyes and vacant faces. Listless men lying prone upon their backs, shaded from the hot sun by blankets, tattered and grimy, drawn over shallow holes scooped in the soft sand. Here a score or two are gathered about a

young fellow with black eyes, black hair, and matted beard, the uncut growth of months, in whose hands are bits of tin and cloth; and here in the midst of this misery and weakness and hopelessness, those who care to take the effort are listening to a lecture on pure mathematics from the first-honor man of his class, who in a few months had graduated from the commencement stage to the bare ground and open sky of a Southern war prison.

For this is Andersonville.

Everything, even under the hot glare of the sun, wears a dun gray look. The souls of these men, though they have not surrendered with their bodies, are in abeyance, and do not even look out of the blank eyes, which are now only greedy and carnal eyes. The kindliest hearts among these thousands have soured; the tenderest-natured among them snarl if they but touch each other's bodies. Yet here is one spark of the human left, surely. A pale, emaciated man lies at full length on the sand. One sees at once that consumption has claimed him, and that he is fast burning the little oil of vitality that is left. Dying and dead men are too common here in Andersonville to cause any comment, and yet this man is attended carefully and anxiously. One kneels beside him, and arranges the bit of brown blanket under his head, squeezes water from a bit of cloth into the hot, fevered mouth, will not let another so much as touch the sick man, or minister to him in the slightest way.

This can be nothing but pure humanity, for the men

are not related by any tie of blood or kin. Yet the sick man seems but little grateful, and there is a hard, cruel look in the other's face, from which one would rather shrink than invite confidence. The dying man knows perfectly well that his careful nurse has shadowed him for days in the hope of seeing him die. For in the moment of death the watchful attendant will lie down with his head upon the body of the dead, and, unless it is snatched away from him by a stronger animal during the slow length of the night, he will be allowed to carry the corpse out in the morning. This gives the one who pays the tender office of humanity the right to gather bits and sticks of wood for a few minutes, with always the chance of slipping the guard and making a dash for the North. Men would have bartered their immortal souls for wood in Andersonville. Under such circumstances they are apt to forget the squeamishness of other days. Richard Wilton had none to forget, and he shadowed his old captain for weeks, with no sympathetic pang, with only a fear that another might in the end prove stronger than himself, and carry off the prize of "dead wood," as the ghastly treasure of a body was called.

Captain Lane had refused to be separated from the score or more men of his company, who had been captured with him in an unfortunate skirmish with the enemy. They loved him for it, these men, and called him a blanked fool in the same breath. Lane knew the love, and excused the harshness of the criticism. It is

the breath of the nostrils to some people, to be in the way of doing for others. If this doing must result in sacrifice, it adds a new glorification to the one who performs it. When there is added to such a bent of character, love for the object to be helped, an intense longing to give of one's very life-blood for their help or comfort, no wonder the world outside cannot understand it. The recipients, half the time, do not understand it themselves.

Lane was a silent and reserved man, a thoughtful man, who accepted people for what appealed to him in them, and made little demonstration of affection. So he loved all his men in a way, and they cared tenderly for him; but one by one they dropped away, mustered out of the hell of Andersonville to the waiting-place over the borders, until only Wilton was left. Now Lane's own time was come; his life was slipping fast away, and Wilton laid claim to his body. Very little passed between them; they were not alike save as a like monotony of suffering had linked them perhaps a little more closely together.

One night, after an unusually warm day, Lane was lying in his accustomed position flat upon the ground, with his head raised a few inches by the meagre blanket which served as a pillow. Wilton crouched beside him, lifting his hungry eyes from time to time to the pale, patient face, which he knew would soon be paler, as death settled over it with heavy, transparent touch. Suddenly Lane beckoned with his thin finger,

and spoke in such clear tones as to startle the man beside him.

"I am dying, Wilton," he said. "I may live through the night, but I do not think it. You will live, you will get out of here, and go back home." The soldier was so near death that Wilton felt the voice to be from the very grave.

"My wife and baby will be looking for me." Strained was the voice now, between weakness and the longing for the touch of familiar hands, a glimpse of familiar objects; and then he went on with marvellous clearness while Wilton listened with almost indifference:

"Emily was never used to going alone, and I not much better, but together we managed somehow. Now she must be alone,—Emily and my baby. There is no one here who knows of them now but you, Wilton, and you have been kind to me,—very kind," with the faintest flicker of a smile even then, knowing the reason of the persistent kindness, while Wilton listened still passively.

"I am going to trust you now with a secret. It is the secret of a dying man, which from the very grave I tell you in trust for my helpless wife and baby." Even this stirred Wilton's interest but little. He heard mechanically, laying up for a possible future use what was said, as a dog buries a bone. He might have occasion to use it, he might not; in either case nothing is lost, something may be gained.

"In my inner shirt-pocket you will find a little book, with the address written in one of the first pages of a

house in Washington, where I left my trunk before coming to the front. In that trunk is a tin cash-box which holds the result of years of toil and effort." Here the voice began to weaken, and as it did, the whole man seemed to break down at once.

"Wilton," he gasped, as the choking sound began to issue from his throat, which betokened that the end was near.

"Wilton—swear—trust—Emily—my baby."

Once more the eyes opened and stared dumbly at the impassive face of the man who was waiting only to take the useless blanket from under the matted brown hair and to appropriate the body. Then came quick gasping sounds, one after another, and—the end.

Here and there was a burst of tuneless song. There was no heart-singing in Andersonville. A rude outcry of laughter or derision now and then disturbed the usual dull monotony of murmuring sound. Wilton coolly lay down with his head upon the yet warm body of his dead captain, taking care first to secure the little worn pocket-book from its place of hiding in the inner shirt-pocket. The solemn stars shone brightly down upon the upturned face of the dead soldier. The hush and silence of night fell upon the throngs of men tired with idleness, worn with despair.

Hark! what is that? Release? rescue? Is it the light from the camp-fires of the Grand Army of the Republic that flashes before Wilton's eyes? Is that confused tramp and rush the sound of the Northern

host breaking through the Southern stockade, with the bright gleam of the stars and stripes above them, and set bayonets in their hands?

Good God! what *is* it?

Wilton sprang to his feet with a wild snarl of fear. The touch of the dead body is yet upon him. He hears hoarse shouts. Up past the library windows shoot curling points of flame. The door is burst in with a crash. Three men with blackened faces and fierce, hungry eyes spring into the room. Wilton cannot distinguish a feature for the film before his eyes. One dark form stands by the table for a moment, then catching up the old cash-box, is off, followed by a curse from his companions and a shriek from the man who has been robbed. In another moment the latter is dashed to the floor and loses consciousness.

"Now for it, man,—there's the safe open,—stow what you can, and let's git out." So hurriedly spoke one of the two men as he bent over Wilton's body, ready to choke back any consciousness that threatened return before the work of the plunderers was done. There was a quick, brutal tumbling about of books and papers, and a smothered cry of rage and disappointment.

"It's not here; not a blasted cent!"

"Quick, look in the table-drawer! Hurry! some one's coming."

"D—n him! smash in his head. He's hidden the swag, or else Croft's got it in the box. He played the chicken-liver on us and bagged the game."

Hall left his guard over Wilton, and joined Waters in a hurried ransacking of the library, but all the time the noise outside was growing louder, and footsteps were heard on the floor above.

"It's no go, Job," Hall cried at last; "we're done for this time. Let's git out before we're caught. Here's some comfort any way." And he snatched at the brandy-bottle. Then they stumbled out cursing and raving, to mix with the crowd outside shouting itself hoarse, and whipping itself every moment into a more angry mood.

Again, as Richard Wilton came back to consciousness, the door of his library was flung open, and two women entered; the one in tears and protestations, the other palpitating with fear, but suddenly aroused to the consciousness of self-dependence, which comes to all pure-natured people with the need.

Richard Wilton picked himself up, confused and dazed, to meet the Widow Lane and her daughter, who had hastily dressed and sought the master of the house. Even in that moment of stupefaction and terror Wilton's eyes fell, fascinated, upon the face and form of Margaret, whose dilated eyes and throbbing bosom still bore testimony to the dreadful awakening from sound sleep, with the cry of fire ringing in her ears. Whatever it was, good or evil,—that touches the divine in man, or that borders on the lowest passions of the animal,—this rushed into and took possession of Wilton's greedy heart this moment, so that he would have made any sacrifice

for just one cry of appeal to him from this girl in her strange sweet beauty.

But the appeal did not come, and events were crowding too fast upon each other to allow for mere utterance.

Despite the efforts of the firemen, the proud mansion was succumbing to the spell of the fire. On all sides of the house a great crowd was gathered, but it was a strange crowd. It did not cheer on the brave fellows who were fighting the flames. The engines found it hard work to push their way, even by the help of snorting horses and hissing steam. The police found their efforts to preserve order almost useless. Again and again were the ropes broken that were drawn to leave a clear space about the burning building for the engines and the men who were attempting to work them.

"The devil is loose, I think," swore the chief engineer to his assistant, as they hurried here and there, swart and blackened, and hoarse with work and shouting. The hose was found to be cut; and just as a mighty stream of water was turned successfully upon a critical point under the eaves of the tall tower above and over the main entrance, a pail of water was dashed into the glowing coals beneath the boiler of steamer No. 6, and a wild cry of exultation burst from the crowd as the pump gave suddenly out, the stream shortened, and finally died away altogether.

It was quite evident that the burning of Richard Wilton's pretentious mansion was not looked upon by

this mob of people as an unmixed evil. They had heard preached very often the duty of seeing good in every calamity, and they were plainly resigning themselves on this occasion to the sweet calm of the doctrine. So the fight went on; and finally, in one wild rush, police, firemen, and all gave way, and a throng of men poured into the house wherever the entrance seemed not too hazardous. The fire had not yet taken hold of the interior. Had it not been for the mob, the firemen would have had little difficulty in saving the entire building, with only a few external scars. Now, as the men swept into the open doors and broken windows, the flames were just beginning to curl and crinkle around the door-posts and over the window-sills.

It may be that the crowd rushed to save property; it may be their desire was to destroy it. It is probable that the greater part of those who found themselves choking and gasping within the smoke-filled halls simply followed the natural mad impulse to go with the stream. Certainly they were not all plunderers, nor even rioters. John Sherwood found himself among them for one. He had been drawn to the scene by the fire-bells and shouts, and had been standing idly on the outskirts of the crowd. His eyes were running carelessly over the front of the house, marking how curiously the different objects in the rooms were thrown into a sort of Rembrandt relief by the flames without, when he saw something that for a moment made him as nerveless as a baby, and the next his blood seemed

liquid fire and his muscles steel,—only two women rushing past a window, but one of them held this stout young fellow to her unseen heart with an invisible clasp that neither time, nor misunderstanding, nor separation could unloose.

Margaret Lane was in peril of her life; and for only the brief moment of a strong man's weakness did John Sherwood recoil, as the snare of Richard Wilton to entrap his love flashed upon him in full force. Then he dashed into the thickest of the crowd, just as it began to surge towards the house. It was a magnificent struggle John made. Between men and over men, knocking one down and springing past another, so it happened that as Richard Wilton began to look about him for a way of escape for himself and the helpless women with him, the door crashed open for the third time on this eventful night, and in a moment the room was filled with a dense volume of smoke, in the midst of which a confused mass of struggling men appeared.

The eyes of love and hate discerned at once the loved and hated form. Out of the medley of faces Margaret saw but one; out of the babel of voices Margaret heard the melody of one, as with a mighty cry John Sherwood sprang to her side and caught her in his arms.

"Oh, my dear, dear heart!" he whispered; and then, "Quick, dear, quick! we must be out of this. Take your mother's hand and hold it fast for life!"

With his left arm about the delicate form, he forced his way to the door, the widow following feebly in ter-

rified bewilderment, tightly held by Margaret. A clear head and a strong arm can do almost anything under ordinary circumstances. When love summons, they can do anything. When love depends, the word failure is an unknown tongue.

So John Sherwood in his masterful way won his way through the throng; and by the time he had reached the outer air the men who had entered with him were forced by the smoke and encroaching heat to follow. But for one maddening moment it seemed as though all effort had been useless. The front door-way was a sheet of flame. With two helpless women, how could John pass it?

"Give the widow to me, John, an' make a dash for the steps; they're stone, an' all safe."

The hoarse whisper was from the lips of Tom Street; and John had time only for a "God bless you, old fellow!" and then his coat was off and wrapped about the head and shoulders of Margaret. She was in his arms, close, close to the breast of her love,—near, near to the heart that was hers.

It was over. John found himself out in the clear space, guarded now by a huge chain and a cordon of police. Close behind him was brave Tom Street, burned and singed, but triumphant, with the widow a very helpless burden in his arms.

A mighty cheer from those who witnessed the rescue greeted the two men, and a ready way was made for them through the crowd.

"Come right home with me, John," cried Tom, leading the way. "Hang the item! some o' the boys will get it." There was a tinge of regret in brave Tom's voice at losing the opportunity for professional enjoyment occasioned by so great a fire; but he stifled the pang under the heavy burden of the widow's drooping form, and they made their way slowly to the little side street on which was situated the house of Thomas Street.

The occasional moments in life, the accidents of contact and environment, are those from which sometimes the brightest and sweetest hours are numbered. Surely John thought so, as with tender care he kept close to him this trembling maid of his, this rare Margaret whom he had rescued from the flames.

Tom could not conceal his astonishment at finding the widow and her daughter at Richard Wilton's. Around the cosey fireside of the Streets the widow had but a confused account to give or explanation to make. She was getting old, she said, and Wilton, as the friend of her dear dead husband, had offered her a home in her last years. It would not be exactly like dependence, for she would oversee his house and make him the comforts of a home. So she had yielded to his earnest request, hearing through the harsh tones the gentle voice of the dead soldier.

Margaret said little. She and John had lived a very long time in that accidental, midnight hour of contact, and among other things they had discovered to their

satisfaction the plot of Richard Wilton to keep the widow and daughter under his roof until the latter should be forced to marry him. Margaret's mother had mistaken softness and delicacy of disposition for weakness of character in her daughter. One thing the girl had promised John, that no force or argument would induce her to go back to Wilton, even though her mother went. As to her mother, however, she felt that she had little to fear, could she but be kept away from Wilton's immediate influence. And to-night the widow agreed that for a few days or weeks they would take up their home with the Streets, and Mrs. Tom unfolded to Margaret the prospect of the little school, concerning which she had been occupied that very day with Sydney Worthington.

So John went back to his boarding-place rather early in the morning for so steady a young man, the landlady thought, but with a lighter heart and quicker pulse than he had known for many days.

Richard Wilton, in the mean time, was nearly crazy with hate, jealousy, and despair. He, too, had seen but one face, and recognized but one voice in all the mad mob that beat about his burning house. John Sherwood's look as he had taken Margaret in his arms was burned into the memory of this man who hated him. He had been caught in the receding rush of the men from his house, and stranded beside steamer No. 6, whose fires had been put out by a free and independent Son of Toil. The cheer that had greeted the rescuers was prolonged to howls and hoots of derision and grati-

fied spite as the mob recognized the short, stubby form of the opulent owner of the Tradelawn Mills emerge from his fast-burning residence in a dishevelled condition. For the fire was now beyond control, and Richard Wilton was forced to stand by and see his property, worth thousands of dollars, licked up by the hungry flames.

A few cold words of official condolence from the chief engineer, and an occasional cry of "How d'ye like it, Dick?" answered by a roar of applause from the crowd, this was Wilton's only comfort as he stood outwardly silent, but inwardly raging fiercely. In the midst of the blackening ruins he saw the face of a dead man, a grave and stern face, questioning him with sad and solemn eyes. The face could not be shut up with the tell-tale papers in the cash-box any longer, for the box was gone, and the tell-tale papers with it. Wilton felt the shadow of a great danger menacing him. If that box fell into the right hands, he realized that he might not only be a beggar, but that there was a very sure prospect of spending some of the remaining years of his life behind iron bars, as a prisoner of the State. One hope he had, and this he nursed fiercely: that the box, as containing only old papers, had been thrown away as useless, and destroyed in the general *mêlée*. But the early morning was very far gone before even this consolation made it possible for Wilton to sleep, and he lay in the luxurious bed of the best room of the first hotel in the city.

Meanwhile, what had become of the box? We have seen Robert Croft entering his home a thief. But he had not the box with him. It was a mad impulse that made him catch it up. Having followed Hall and Waters to the mill-owner's library, careless and reckless of what might happen, still the habit and instinct of a lifetime was strong upon him. Seeing the open box upon the table, knowing the gloating disposition of his late employer, it had occurred to him in a flash that he was enjoying the miser's pleasure of counting over the thousands of dollars he was to pay out the next day at the moment he was disturbed. Croft knew his companions well enough to realize that money was the chief object of their individual attack upon Wilton's house. The impulse came to him to save the money and restore it when he could. It was a mad thing, perhaps, but the honest instinct of a true nature, striking for the shortest, if most desperate, way out of a difficulty.

So before he knew just what he had done, or just what the doing of it involved, he found himself out of the house and disentangled from the crowd, with the old cash-box in his possession,—a thief.

The thought crushed him. Low as he had fallen heretofore, he had been conscious of still keeping his self-respect. It is a terrible moment for one when honor feels self-tainted, for in no other way can it contract a stain. Robert Croft drank to the depths the bitterness of such a moment as he wandered on away from the roar of voices and the crackle of the flames. Sick at heart

he was, worn out in mind, self-accused. He thought of his broken home, the wife who had violated her wifehood, the daughter who had shamed her womanhood, and now the father, who was a thief. How far he had gone he did not know, until he caught the gleam of something high above the houses and shops and factory chimneys, a pale, luminous cross, which Mark Winthrop had placed upon the top of St. Mary's steeple. It was a conceit of this young man that the cross meant so much to the human race that even in the night-time it should bear its silent testimony to the Man, and so night after night, rising above the mean portion of the city, shimmering and glowing from the light within, the symbol of the Christian faith was uplifted. To-night it had its message if never before, and the message went home. A sudden thought came to the sad man, weary of his heavy burden. "Yes! yes!" he muttered to himself, gathering together his wellnigh exhausted energies and quickening a little his lagging pace, "why not my burden at the foot of the cross too?"

He hurried on until he stood before the dark and silent church, under the pale radiance of the cross. In the gloomy door-way he entered, and when he emerged the box was no longer in his hands. Then he went home, as we have seen, far from being at peace with himself, but, will it be believed? with a great upspringing tenderness in his heart for the woman with the hard lines about her mouth, who lay in a heavy sleep, moaning now and then, and starting, though not to wakeful-

ness, as Robert Croft, for the first time in many, many years, leaned over her and left a kiss upon the worn face.

"*She* wouldn't have done what I've done," he said. "Poor heart, it *has* been my fault, and I've failed to see it. Poor heart! She's suffered too." And the husband lay down beside the wife. Was it weakness for this strong man to sob himself off to sleep? Was it weakness for him to cry out, "Oh, God, give it back to us again! Give us back our baby; give us back each other! Oh, God, pity and forgive!"

And what of the box?

It happened (very fortunately, the writer thinks for the interest of his story) that the Reverend Mark Winthrop was a man utterly careless of scientific opinion, and defiant of the well-known laws of political economy. So when he, as hundreds of others that night, was awakened from his sleep by the alarm of fire-bells and steam-whistles, he first performed his duty of an American citizen by watching for a while the burning of Richard Wilton's house, and then—of all things in the world—took himself off to his chapel to pray.

It may have been an absurd thing to do. Probably the wisest of us think that it was. But Mark Winthrop did not think so. He had an idea that from King David down to the last-elected President, God reigns and rules. He had a further idea that God rules as a Father, and that, in spite of the laws of supply and demand, He, if appealed too, will occasionally interfere for the good of

His children. Winthrop heard the voice of God in everything. It was startling even to himself sometimes to notice how clearly distinct that voice was out of the most peculiar surroundings. The gathering of an enormous fortune, the creation of a great monopoly, the outbreak of a labor strike,—all these, according to this young enthusiast, were the finger-marks of the Almighty impressing His stamp upon the world.

So the young rector of St. Mary's went away from the centre of bad passions and animal brutishness to seek the quiet of his chapel. Up into the chancel and before the altar he bowed, praying simply for all sorts and conditions of men. Praying humbly that power might come to himself, as one of the prophets of the Son of man, to disentangle in one little corner the snarls of the world. Praying boldly just now that the scene of riot from which he had just come might not be wholly the devil's work, but that in it, even, men might see more than a momentary outburst of violent passions, and that whatever was to be learned would be learned.

He was a simple, clean-hearted, foolish young fellow, most undoubtedly. His very bishop would have said, suavely and kindly, that it would be as well not to worry much over these matters. The rich and the poor met together, and the Lord was the maker of them all. That ought to be settling enough.

Of course it ought; nobody doubts it; and the present writer is fully as much ashamed of his young parson as any of his readers can possibly be.

His praying did Mark some good, however, and he went out very late into the solemn stillness of the cold, glistening night. As he did so, his foot struck an object in the door-way, which gave out a dull, metallic sound. Much mystified, Mark stooped and picked up a battered tin box. "Some one has put it here for safe-keeping," he said at last to himself. "But I won't answer for its safety if the mob comes this way, as some of them may, before the owner puts in an appearance." He thought for a moment, and concluding that whoever had left it would make his loss known, and wishing to preserve it from possible damage, Mark groped his way into the church once more, and into the little robing-room to the right of the chancel, where he laid the box away upon a shelf in the closet and turned the key.

Then he walked back to his hotel, appearing, to the amazement of the night clerk, very long after his usual hour of retiring.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DAY AFTER.

THE city world ran on as usual the morning after the events recorded in the last chapter. Gradually the hum and buzz of that populous, brick-walled beehive arose over the hush of a winter's night, as the soft light

of St. Mary's cross paled before the faint gold of a winter morning's sun.

At six precisely by the clock over the central tower of the Tradelawn Mills, the pulse of that great body began to throb, and several hundred men, women, and children began to earn their daily bread. Many was the sly look exchanged that morning between man and man as they went soberly about their work. The crowd before Richard Wilton's mansion on the previous night had been very largely swelled by his own people. This morning was their little hour of triumph, and they enjoyed it so far as they might in secrecy. Many of them had gone a long way round that morning for the exquisite pleasure of gloating over the charred walls and blackened ruins of their employer's late dwelling. Many of them gave up two-thirds of the noon hour to enjoy the same grateful sight. The ex-strikers felt the law of compensation working in full force, and on this morning thought very lightly indeed of the debts that had increased upon them through their idleness and the reduction of wages. It is a question whether Richard Wilton would have been altogether gratified by the readiness and cheerfulness with which tools were handled and looms attended that day, could he have known the cause.

The burned-out millionaire awoke late from a not over-comfortable sleep. Black care, in the humble form of an old-fashioned tin cash-box, fell immediately upon him, enwrapping him in a shroud of miserable despair.

Thoughts of everything else fled from him. In the presence of a great care, or in the enjoyment of a new, overwhelming sensation, it is curious how utterly immaterial all things else become. Pleasures that before have stirred the blood, do not cause a flutter; interests that have engaged every waking moment, die out; the new experience dwarfs everything beside. On this morning Richard Wilton, selfish, avaricious, grasping, and vulgarly proud, forgot his burned house and furniture. Richard Wilton, the lover, forgot the spell of Margaret Lane's beauty. The loss of the tin box so overshadowed these that, for a time, it seemed as though they had never been. What *could* he do to feel the ground as firmly under his feet as it had been twenty-four hours before? This was the substance of his thought, as he dressed slowly in his gorgeously furnished room on the second floor of the Hotel Woolsey. The box and its contents might have been lost and consumed,—the chances were in favor of it. But chances are not assurances, though they stand nine to one.

Pale and unshaven, Wilton went down to a late breakfast, condoled with on all sides, especially by the obsequious waiter, who took a fee unctuously, and almost regretted for a moment that he had helped to cut a section of hose the night before.

The owner of the Tradelawn Mills read the morning paper mechanically. Staring head-lines told him of his loss of the previous night, and down the long column he looked anxiously at last, to discover any allusion to the

tin box. But of course there was none, and slight as the chance had been, Wilton drew a sigh of relief. He could hold up his head for a few hours longer, at all events. Finally, one sentence towards the close of the report caught his eye, and started a new train of thought. The sentence ran:

"It is now supposed that Mr. Wilton's mansion was fired by some of the late strikers, who were inspired by feelings of revenge. If this is the case, an immediate investigation should be made, and summary justice meted out. Where life and property are so constantly at the disposal of passionate and turbulent spirits, as is the case in every manufacturing city of the size of this, there must be short shrift with discovered offenders."

"Ah! John Sherwood, I've got you now," he muttered between his teeth. "I'll make you sweat, if I have to go under myself to do it." And Wilton grinned in low triumph. "I can swear to *your* bein' there, an' it'll go hard but I'll git you such a dose as won't taste to your liken'."

Then he sent two messages, one for his head clerk Williams, dreading to go out upon the street himself, and another to the chief of police. This done, he lighted a cigar and waited, pacing the room with heavy, impatient strides.

And now the Widow Lane and Margaret were domiciled under the roof of Thomas Street. The former was in a sorrowfully maudlin state the day after her sudden night journey. Regret for the pleasant and luxurious

quarters from which she had been so unceremoniously hastened was mingled with a reluctance to say much of her loss. For Margaret had now assumed the nominal, as she had long held the virtual, reins of authority.

"No! mamma, we will never go back to Mr. Wilton's, never!" This she said as they were dressing before coming down to a late breakfast.

"We have no claim upon him, and for every favor he does us he expects something he cannot have. Oh, mamma dear, you do not *want* me to marry that man! You would not have me sell myself for fine clothes and a great house! Why, now that I see through Richard Wilton, how meanly he has taken advantage of us, how craftily he has played upon your love for poor, dear papa, how shamefully he has plotted against a girl who has no brother, and whose father is dead,—oh! I despise him and loathe him. Marry him! I would go down on my knees and wear out my hands with the hardest work sooner."

The young girl's eyes were flashing, her cheek flushing, and her small form dilating with the strength of her emotion. And the widow cowered before her. It was hard to realize that they were mother and child.

"But, Margaret," feebly interrupted the other, "how kind Mr. Wilton's been to us! how much he's done for us!"

"Too much, mamma, altogether."

The widow failed to grasp her daughter's meaning, although the emphasis was sufficiently marked.

"And then your poor father, Margaret. Would he have advised anything that was not right? Did he not send Mr. Wilton to us as a protector when, Heaven knows, we needed one badly enough?" And here the widow sobbed audibly. The dead soldier was still living to this faithful if deluded heart. The wounds of a dozen years were not yet healed. All thoughts led back to the silent and nameless grave outside the grim stockade.

"Oh, mamma!" cried the girl, despairingly. "What can we know of how far papa trusted Richard Wilton? Do you not know that a man with so mean a nature could not have the generous heart you attribute to him? A noble man would have done what he has done, but in a different way. He would have scorned to take the smallest advantage of his own generosity. He would not have forced his love upon an unwilling girl. Least of all would he have played upon a——" she was about to say a weak woman's credulity, but loyally refrained and altered the expression—"upon a mother's anxiety for a daughter's welfare, or a wife's reverence for a dead husband. I do not know why he has been so free with his help and care,—I will grant that he has,—but I know him now too well to doubt but that it is for some other motive than respect to papa, or real kindness to ourselves. And now, mamma, before we go down, I must say something that is very hard for me to say. I do not mean to renounce my dear mamma; I do not mean to dishonor her; but for my own honor, and for the

sake of the future happiness of both, I say that I will not willingly meet Richard Wilton again. I beg and pray of you to give him up. I can support you. I will work my fingers to the bone, I will count out my life-blood drop by drop, in exchange for food and shelter for you; but if you will accept his protection, you must go to him alone. By my dear father's memory, I beg you to stand with me. Kiss me, dear, and wipe away the tears; we must go down-stairs now." The slim girl bent over her mother, who sat sobbing softly in a chair, and dropped a kiss upon the wrinkled forehead.

"Well, well, Margaret," the tone was fretful and peevish, "you must have your way, I suppose, but it seems very hard to be taught by one's daughter."

Margaret sighed, and then said, cheerfully, "Now, mamma, two of us against the world; two of us with love for each other, what can we not do?" And they descended to the small dining-room, where Mrs. Street was waiting to greet them with a cordial welcome.

Oh, this artful Margaret! Two of them indeed against the world! Just as though there were not another who was ready to count out his heart's-blood, too, for both of them, for love of one. Two of them against the world!

So after the storm up-stairs, the widow settled herself according to her comfortable custom, to be moulded and guided by her momentary environment; while Margaret joined in the practical discussion of what was to be done, smiling brightly to herself at certain thoughts,

and wondering if John had hurt himself the night before when he fought the flames with her close folded in his arms.

Two arrivals shortly after the discussion and the breakfast that followed served to clear away somewhat of the horizon of doubt that, even to Margaret's hopeful mind, would occasionally look a trifle dark and heavy.

First came in Sydney Worthington, the bright, proud face touched with a glow from the winter sunshine, the brown eyes dancing with health and happiness. She had passed Mark Winthrop on her way, and for a defiant beauty, at whom men looked longingly and hopelessly from afar, her heart throbbed strangely merely for hearing his good-morning and feeling for a moment the touch of his hand. Sydney knew that Mark was a professed celibate, so of course she felt perfectly safe in allowing herself to think of him at times. He could not know that the brown eyes deepened their hue a little, and the warm hand trembled the least bit, in his presence. Sydney the superb brooded a little over the strangeness of it all, and tried to dismiss it from her mind,—with the usual result. This morning she thought she had forgotten the serious face of Mark Winthrop, as she talked volubly and sympathetically with Margaret about the school and scholars. With her usual energy, heightened by the new inspiration that had come into her life of late, the blessed inspiration of burden-bearing for others, as the real key for unlocking the puzzles of life, Sydney had made the necessary arrangements for Mar-

garet's future, even to the securing of a room, and the pledging of a number of scholars. Into all these details she plunged at once, with a fire and brilliancy and charm that came, unconscious of it as she was, from the accidental morning meeting with the rector of St. Mary's.

Margaret could not fail to be pleased, but was at first disposed to be reserved. The poor child's self-respect had received such a great gaping wound, as she awakened to the meaning of her dependence upon Wilton, that she fluttered away at the first hint of receiving help now of whatever kind. But there is dependence and dependence. One sort is the most charming of independence, the free, unquestioned taking of a free, unhampered gift, enabling the one who receives to accomplish by it the wishes of the one who gives.

"Please, Margaret dear, do not think for a moment of refusing, because this little has been done for you, instead of your trudging about the city without any friends doing it for yourself." So said Sydney, eagerly. "I am not offering to pay your board you know, or put pretty clothes upon your back," laughingly. "Only I know people who want their children taught by a lady whom they will respect for herself, as well as for her second reader and slate-pencils. You want just such children to take care of. I introduce a rising and talented schoolma'am to the parents of budding genius,—that is all. Why, it's pure business. I may ask a commission from you on each scholar. If real estate goes down much lower, I may have to come to it. Then I will, you

depend upon it. I shall use my friends in the days of adversity. You may want an assistant teacher some day, who knows? I beg to recommend myself. Now, dear, what do you think of it?"

In the caressing way of some women with whom it is a second nature, which makes them often to be so misunderstood as to be called flirts by their gentle sisters, —and is certainly charming to men,—Sydney laid her gloved hand upon the golden hair of Margaret, and swept over the red lips a little kiss of wistful query.

"You are very kind, Sydney, I'm sure," answered Margaret, holding tight the hand that fell instinctively to hers, and the matter was thereupon settled.

The widow even rose to the point of rapture, and Mrs. Street was mildly jubilant.

Not a word of Wilton nor of the events of the night escaped any of the women. The widow had placidly forgotten her morning interview. Margaret was naturally silent, and if Sydney knew anything, which she probably did not, of the few weeks' sojourn of her *protégée* under the roof of Richard Wilton, she politely kept her wonder and her comments to herself.

While plans were under discussion, and final arrangements being made (for Margaret's duties were to begin at once), a second visitor put in an appearance, being none other than John Sherwood. John Sherwood, with his yellow hair and beard singed brown, and his strong arms and hands scarred a little, and a general feeling of weakness of body which had afforded him sufficient

excuse for providing a substitute for his new position at the bank that morning; especially as he was anxious to know how the widow had borne the fatigues of the night. The widow was getting along in years he knew, and such a delicate attention is only proper and polite to one's seniors.

So, casually, John had dropped in at the Streets, and was shyly introduced to Sydney by Margaret, who gave him at the same time a warning glance, which he obeyed, and listened interestedly to the school plan, with never a word of the fire or Richard Wilton, or the sorrows of lovers who have been separated for three whole, forlorn weeks.

Sydney examined this striking-looking young fellow curiously, but not in a way that need have made Margaret anxious, if she had such a thought. Jealousy of course is an element of love, but not the jealousy that distrusts, only that hungry jealousy of looks and tender acts bestowed by the loved one, perhaps necessarily, upon others. Margaret did not doubt one nerve of John's whole body, nor a pin-point of loyalty in his whole soul. But if this quiet little maid had answered to herself, she would have been ashamed to acknowledge that she grudged Sydney the right to admire and praise this lover of hers. What was a hand-clasp, or a soft look in Sydney's eyes, as she led the young fellow to talk of co-operation? Yet Margaret *was* glad when Sydney arose to go, while she loved her truly, and did not doubt John a bit.

Let not any reader fear the sequel. There will be no jealousies or heartburnings, though I flatter myself I might make a very pretty little bit of trouble between John and Margaret were I so minded. All on account of Sydney too, who bids them a bright good-morning, and flashes away homeward, thinking Margaret's lover a very nice fellow, but preferring herself darker-complexioned men, especially if they have grave faces and a masterful way with them, and have renounced the world, and believe in celibacy as the higher life. This latter element in the make-up of an ideal man was especially noble and attractive, and Sydney thought so long upon it that some of the light went out of her eyes, and her answers at luncheon that day were so wildly far from relevant that Mrs. Sands turned pale, fearing Sydney might be ill, and Phil murmured in a half-whisper that *too* much co-operation and select schools was making his sister mad.

Phil took a base advantage of this absent-mindedness finally, and asked Sydney if her studies had taught her anything concerning the effect of a protective tariff on the price of peanuts in the middle ages.

When Sydney answered to this a vague "Certainly, Phil," the climax was reached, and Sydney, coming to herself, realized that for a proud woman with a heart in her keeping she was thinking too much of celibacy as a theory of life. Then she fled from Phil's laughter, and found a refuge in her own dainty room. Here in her realm the young queen saw visions and dreamed dreams.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SAME DAY.

MRS. STREET had household duties that took up her time, and, being a good housewife, she went about them, leaving her guests to occupy themselves as best they might.

The widow settled quietly down in a corner by the fire to enjoy, through the columns of the *Weekly Visitor*, the comforting intelligence that an Indian baby had been baptized in Arizona, and to extract from set articles of pious comment such spiritual refreshment as the *Visitor* was wont to afford.

Margaret, of course, offered to help Mrs. Street in her work, which offer was promptly declined. She then offered to read to her mother, to the ill-concealed disgust of John Sherwood, who did not yearn at that moment for religious intelligence. The widow, however, preferred the occasional dozes which, while reading to herself, it was legitimate for her to take, and so John and Margaret stole off to the *tête-à-tête* by the front window. It was not so cold as to require any very close proximity to the fire. Then John was put through a tender catechism as to his injuries, which in Margaret's eyes seemed enormous. How he *must* have suffered, and the scarred hands were cooed over, until John began to take great

pride in himself as a martyr. When he told her that the heat of that terrible rush through the fire was unfelt because of the warmth of her heart lying so close to his, the foolish girl believed him, and I am prepared to state that at this point, with a furtive glance towards the widow, John stole a kiss.

The writer kindly but firmly declines to go on with this scene. He has tried to rule love out of his story on a very noble moral principle. What has crept in has been not by his wish, but against his power of prevention. There is more coming in later chapters, and whatever of reserve strength there may be in this pen must be held back for the time when an actual love-scene (and necessary to the development of the story) will be introduced for the satisfaction of those kindly creatures who have already groaned over pages of preaching, and skipped whole chapters of solid and useful information.

This being the case, an interruption of the lovers is brought about before they were fairly aware that anything at all had been accomplished. A sudden ring at the front door bell, followed by a confused conversation, and presently Mrs. Street ushered a strange man into the parlor, where the widow is found dozing over missionary statistics, John is drumming idly upon a window-pane, and Margaret is finding employment of a useful nature in dusting some of the ornaments on the faded and cracked piano.

"A man to see you, Mr. Sherwood," says Mrs. Street,

with a troubled look. She did not like the face of this stranger, and the intuitive womanly shrinking from being the bearer of bad news caused her to stammer in her speech.

The man walked up to John, who had turned indifferently from the window to meet him.

"I have a warrant here for your arrest," he said, not offensively, and with almost an air of deprecation. The deputy sheriff, for such he was, blurted out his mission without a thought for any one beyond the man whom he addressed.

"You will come quietly, of course," turning back the lappel of his coat and displaying the official badge.

"Oh, mercy!" groaned Mrs. Street, "why *did* I let him in?" As though her puny effort could have stood between John and the law by the simple act of shutting a door.

The widow stared with wide-open eyes, and face ready to take on the proper expression at the first indication of what it should be.

At the words "warrant" and "arrest" Margaret stood as one stunned. Her John touched upon the shoulder by an officer of the law? What it could possibly mean, save that her lover's honor was called in question, she did not stop to think. Swiftly she passed to the side of Sherwood, who was more stupefied than any of the others. Gently stole her little hand into his, and, standing there with her back to the rest, she smiled up into the bewildered face of her lover, with such a look of love

and trust, that in all his after-life John Sherwood connected sheriffs and warrants with the most beautiful and tender associations. Still holding his hand, the girl turned towards the officer with a look which might have been interpreted, "Well! what of it?"

Then John spoke.

"A warrant for my arrest! this is very strange! Upon what charge, sir?"

It seemed so ridiculous that he should be asking a sheriff concerning a charge against himself. He could have smiled, but that the man's answer had such a loathsome sound,—

"The charge is—theft!"

"Good God, man, what do you mean?" roared the young man, wildly. "Theft! me! Do you know me? You've mistaken your man. I am John Sherwood." And he drew himself up to his full height and glowered down angrily upon the half-apologetic minion of the law.

The widow burst into tears, and cried, rocking herself backward and forward in her little low chair, while the *Weekly Visitor* tumbled rustling to the floor.

"Oh, lawsy me! oh, lawsy me! the deceitfulness of this wicked world! Margaret Lane, come away from that man; come away from him, I say!" lifting her head for a moment and darting as nearly a crushing look at John as she was able.

Mrs. Street looked more and more troubled and embarrassed.

Margaret only smiled, and held tighter the scarred hand that had shielded her from the biting flames not many hours before.

"There may be some mistake in the charge, Mr. Sherwood, but none, I'm sure, in the man," said the officer at length, looking from John to Margaret and from Margaret back to John, as though uncertain in what corner to direct his remarks.

"But when, where, how, by whom is this charge brought?" cried Sherwood, growing more angry as the enormous absurdity of the accusation became fully apparent.

"You are charged by Richard Wilton with having taken from his library last night, during the progress of the fire, a certain tin box containing valuable papers. He says that he plainly recognized your features out of the crowd, and has sworn out a warrant for your arrest."

"Richard Wilton!" Margaret smiled the odd triumphant smile again, as she repeated the name slowly. Even the mediocre intellect of the deputy sheriff wondered how the proprietor of the Tradelawn Mills would have enjoyed the intonation of voice in which his name was uttered.

"It is nothing, John," said Margaret. This slip of a girl felt herself to be entirely mistress of events. "It will be a little trouble for you—for us,—but Richard Wilton does not have it in his power to harm you. He is mean and low and will stoop to anything,

but a thing that crawls cannot injure a man who walks erect, dear. I know that Richard Wilton hates you—because—because"—she trembled a moment and then went bravely on before the wondering deputy sheriff, who was not accustomed to such scenes, much less to having the love confessions of a young woman mixed up with the transaction of professional business—"because I love you." Then Margaret said, "Good-morning, John," and went over to her mother, while John and the sheriff went out the door, and Mrs. Street came back to comfort the girl, who, she found, needed no comfort.

"I love John the better now; that is all Richard Wilton has gained by this. John steal a box of papers, or a million dollars!" She turned proudly away, and proceeded to the congenial task of making her mother esteem John Sherwood as a martyr to love and truth. By the time that Tom Street had appeared for the noon dinner hour the Widow Lane was firmly convinced that a more injured young man than her daughter's lover never lived, and that any deputy sheriff who would lend his official rank to the work of throwing disgrace upon such a noble fellow was unworthy of the public confidence.

After showing all this strength and firmness, and shining in these unadorned pages with quite the radiance of a live heroine, it is with some reluctance that the present truthful chronicler is bound to state how that Margaret went to her own room directly after dinner and cried and sobbed most disgracefully. But there

was no sign of tears in her eyes nor of tremor in her voice when she thanked Sydney Worthington early in the evening for bringing her news that after a preliminary examination John had been bound over for trial in three weeks, Philip Worthington becoming his bondsman.

So John was free and his innocence beyond a doubt. This was not a decision of the court, of course, but that mattered little to Margaret. In the court of her heart her lover was declared stainless. What could touch him after that? Margaret was far from unhappy that night, as she read her psalms in the little prayer-book John had given her. So it adds to the essential enjoyment of some women to be able to bear something with those they love. The burdens that fall on the loved ones alone, these crush them far more than burdens a thousand-fold heavier that they are permitted to share.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RECOVERY OF TWO LIVES.

ONE day, a fortnight after the events just recorded, Mark Winthrop was called out to administer the last sacrament to a dying woman. The summons came just as he finished reading a letter from an old college friend, to whom he had confided in a guarded way all he knew

himself, of his feeling for Sydney Worthington. His friend's letter closed with these words, from which the drift of his own communication may be surmised:

"Now then, old fellow, let me take a great liberty with you. Of course I am only a layman and a lawyer, two callings far enough removed from your own; but I do flatter myself that I know something of human nature. To all intents and purposes you are in love with this young woman, who is mad, like yourself, on the subject of the wrongs of the masses. Don't dispute the fact, however little you wish to acknowledge it; no man, not even a clergyman, and a professed celibate at that, would write of a woman as you write of this one—'She is strong, tender, and true; proud of her own rare nature, dainty as a princess, and capable of exalting to the third heavens any man whom she may honor with the wealth of her heart's love'—without being *very* far gone, celibacy to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, Mark, be honest with yourself and fair to this girl, who I am sure is a noble creature to have broken down the reserve of such a nature as yours. Put your love under as heavy bonds and upon as long a probation as you choose, but do not turn your back upon it because it formed no part of your scheme of life when you graduated from the divinity school. The struggle you have had has been an honest one, and a hard one I know. But it is only so that anything worth the getting is won in this world. Struggle a little more now, if you will. Do not give up, beaten by the callow opinions of

a young deacon in his first surplice. The shaking up will do you good. The miners get pure gold only by many washings and rubbings. A man ought not to have the woman who is to be his inspiration to all eternity, perhaps, ready-made at his hand and labelled. He must pass by many before he reaches her,—God help him if he has picked one up mistakenly in the mean time. When he finds her, as you seem to have done, he is a great fool not to make a supreme effort to win her, I don't care if he has written a whole ream of tracts on the blessedness of the solitary life. Here endeth the first lesson, Mark. Let me hear from you soon."

This was the letter, and Mark was almost ashamed of himself to find how in his heart he agreed with the arguments of the writer. Now as he drew on a coat, and pulled an unclerical-looking soft hat over his forehead, going out to face the biting wind that swept up the street from the harbor, he was glad that he had been summoned for a sad and solemn task.

He could forget himself and his perplexities for a time in giving aid and comfort to this old negro woman, to whom he had been ministering for many months. His thoughts would have time to crystallize, being left to themselves, and his emotion would have opportunity to cool, then he would think again.

As he left Main Street, and struck off with a long, vigorous, swinging stride, he ran against Robert Croft, who, sad-eyed and heavy-hearted, was on his way to talk over his grief with Winthrop. So he said briefly, and,

seeing that the clergyman was hurrying on some errand, said he would call in the evening perhaps. Something in the deadly sadness of the dark face touched Mark.

"Walk with me a bit, Croft, and talk it out," he said. "It's about poor Ellen, I suppose. Speak out as you would to a brother, my dear fellow."

What a way this man had with people! The respectable brethren whom he met at dreary Monday morning discussions of subjects ecclesiastical—dead for ages, and crying aloud for decent burial—looked upon Winthrop somewhat askance. He was too good friends with a large and not over-select constituency of vulgar sinners, they thought. Of course a priest must extend a hand to the help of sinners as well as to people who drove to church in carriages, and whose sins were not yet discovered,—that was all right enough,—but it must be admitted that Mark was broadening the mantle of charity a little too far when, on one occasion, he picked a drunken woman of the town out of a gutter, and almost carried her in his arms to her home, to get her away from the boys who were jeering her; and when, on another occasion, he went bail for the keeper of a liquor saloon, in bad odor, whom he fancied was being persecuted as well as prosecuted by some zealous friends of temperance reform.

Mark laughed joyously in the faces of his horrified brethren when they took him to task, and had his sad and doubting moments alone in his own room. He was conscious of living only for one thing, to be of some help to the people who were otherwise helpless. He

counted it a mighty thing to stand where his hand could be touched by any of that vast outcast population of the city, who dared not raise their eyes as they walked along the crowded pavements for fear of a look of scorn or contempt on the well-fed faces that passed them by.

So Mark deliberately drew men and women to him in a very queer assortment. Many of them went to St. Mary's Chapel now and then; not to be prayed with, nor sung to, nor preached at, but to look for an hour on the face of a man who they knew would stand by them and help them, if the need should ever come, though their hands were soiled and their hearts were stained. Mark in his white surplice seemed to them very like the angels of their childish dreams. He did not honey his preaching for them one iota, and they respected him the more for this. But somehow when he had finished speaking, there was always the vision of an open door before them, and he won these otherwise careless and indifferent people to hope,—to hope even out of their black hearts and hardened consciences. Mark should have been ashamed of himself to be sure. He should have sat at the feet of John Calvin, or any other second edition of Augustine's dyspeptic hours of composition, through whose preaching of the gospel of good news one is always hearing the closing of iron gates, and the rattling of heavy chains, and the clanging of iron bars.

Mark cared little enough for what the respectable classes of society thought of him while he could make of himself a bridge from despair to hope for such

people as the dying negro woman who was now waiting for him, and the worn-faced man, who as they went poured out the weary, weary trouble of his heart about his child. He told Mark they had not found a trace of her in all these days. Her mother was silent and said little, but the weight and shame of Ellen's loss seemed slowly killing her. Croft knew that the clergyman was much in the worst parts of the city, and familiar with a great deal of the low and degraded life into which he was sadly sure Ellen had sunk. Would he not make inquiries? Would he not set others, if it were possible, to find some track of the lost child? Once in her presence, Croft knew that he could persuade her to come back to her home. She had always loved him; she could not cast off that love all in a moment. Only let him see her once again. With an aching heart Mark listened, and promised, feeling wellnigh hopeless, but determined to do all he could. Croft left him then, to plod back stupidly and dreamily to the home from which his child had gone out. It was a heavy burden Croft was carrying these days. But every day the sweet, true nature of the man was brought out and refined more and more. So tender was he of his wife after that night of madness; so thoughtful of her comfort with the little means he had, for extra work was not plentiful, and the black-list was still in force. But Robert Croft and his wife were learning much. It is in the seeming pauses of life, after all, in which the most is accomplished.

Mark Winthrop pushed his way on, through the

meanest and poorest quarter of the city. A recent fall of snow had failed to cover up, even for an hour, the filth of the streets. All about were the outward and visible signs of poverty and wretchedness. Even in this bitter weather children were making pathetic attempts at playing out of doors. From an occasional open hallway gushed a sickening breath of vile air tainted with the smell of cooking food. Mark had learned not to be much moved by these things, save as he rebelled against the thought that others should be forced to endure them, day in and day out for year after year.

Presently he turned from the sidewalk, and ascended the two or three steps that led to the door of a great brick tenement-house, dingy and spotted, and greasy. Up four pairs of worn stairs he climbed, and through a dingy hall semi-lighted by windows in front and rear which seemed never to have known the touch of cloth and water. Before one of the half-dozen doors he paused and knocked, then, without waiting for a response, entered, and went softly to the low bed in one corner of the room, on which lay the object of his visit.

A negro woman, whom he had first found out by means of a good-hearted Irishwoman on the floor below, who thought Mark next to "the praste" for goodness and charity. The woman was half paralyzed, and had lain for weeks in almost the one position, attended only by a young girl, her daughter, who formerly had supported them both by going out to day's work. Latterly, however, Winthrop had bade the daughter stay with the

sick woman all the time, and he saw that they wanted for nothing.

The girl was by her mother's bedside now, and raised glad eyes to Mark, yielding at the same time her place to him. The woman's face was thin, and wore the peculiar pallor which seems so ghastly with a black skin. Eyes deep sunken with long suffering gleamed a feeble welcome to the young man, as he sat down beside the bed for a moment and took the feeble, scrawny, claw-like fingers in his own. He saw that she was dying. Sobbing bitterly, the daughter told him how the doctor had said that her mother could not last many hours longer, and while yet she could speak she had expressed a wish for the Sacrament of her Lord's Body and Blood when the final summons came. The sick woman heard every word distinctly, and with bright eyes, not yet dimmed, looked wistfully from one to the other, a dumb appeal in every glance, a longing to speak she could not satisfy.

Gently as a woman Mark went about his preparations for administering the sacrament. A little stand at the head of the bed, covered with a white cloth, served as an altar. The elements were ready, and the young clergyman began the solemn service of the Prayer-Book for the Communion of the Sick. It was a strange scene. The drawn face of the negro woman, staring up with wide-open eyes, the weeping girl kneeling at the foot of the bed, the grave-faced priest in his white robes reading the service of consecration. At the end of this prayer,

in the churches, a hymn is sung. Here it would have been omitted. As the faint "amen" of the young girl was uttered, Mark knelt to take first of the elements before administering to the others. As he did so, bowing before the rude altar, the faint scent of violet perfumed the air, he heard a rustle behind him, and then a sweet, steady voice softly singing the Communion Hymn,—

> "Bread of the world, in mercy broken,
> Wine of the soul, in mercy shed."

Well he knew the voice. Under his surplice he thrilled to the tiniest nerve, as it rose and fell in the blessed hymn, so like a benediction.

Not for a moment did his thoughts wander from the mystery in which he was about to act. Not for a moment did he dishonor his Master by a single alien emotion; yet as the last words died away, and the low amen was sung, he felt an added joy, bringing an added responsibility, knowing that human and divine love are parts of one great whole, and that one might almost as well deny God as to deny the heart that God has given.

As they rose from their knees, one quick glance of grateful recognition passed between these two, and then their attention was drawn to the woman before them. Her face was radiant as she recognized Sydney, and she made a violent effort to speak, but failed.

"You knew her, then? You have been here before?" queried Mark, in a surprised tone.

"Only two or three times in as many weeks, and I

have sung to her. I came in quite accidentally this afternoon, and could not help remaining when I saw—was it wrong?"

"Quite right, and very good of you, Miss Sydney; how could you doubt it? Wait. She wants you."

The dying woman made a supreme effort and raised the skinny hand, beckoning Sydney to lean over her. Close to the withered lips the fair fresh cheek lay, and in a choking whisper the woman gasped out,—

"Sing—nearer—Father—mansions." This was all Sydney caught.

"She wants me to sing. I know what it is. May I?" simply asked the girl.

The shy humility of her question touched Mark, who saw that she held back from taking his rightful place as the last comforter of the dying. "Sing! oh, yes, do! She is going very fast." And the priest stepped back to make way for the woman. Standing beside the bed with its mean coverings, forgetting her dainty skirts and furred garments, forgetting Mark, forgetting everything save the trembling soul just ready for its outward flight, Sydney sang in a rich voice that had a little tremor now and then, under the strong emotion of her heart, the tender and beautiful words,—

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er:
I am nearer home to-day
Than I've ever been before."

As she sang a new light stole over the negro woman's

dun face, lying there as she was, wasted and wellnigh pulseless, the quick breath coming faster and faster and heavier and heavier with every recurring heart-beat,—the worn and wrinkled features seemed touched with the glory of that

"Light that never was on land or sea."

It may be that a vision of the "many mansions" opened out before her eyes, closing fast as they were upon the broken lights of earthly things, and slowly opening under the wide illumination of the great white throne,

"But lying darkly between."

Clear and birdlike were the trembling notes, soaring away, it seemed, over the waters of the dark river, bearing with them the souls of the listeners. Softly the words dropped back from their upward flight, not one lost by the way, and with the triumphant outburst of melody that seems to be the clashing of angelic cymbals at the opening wide of heaven's gate, the watchers saw that the soul had fled. The eyes, half opened, seemed to cling yet to the earth; the lips, just parted, seemed yearning still to speak. The scene was over. Another distorted and tangled life-problem was solved.

As best she might Sydney comforted the bereaved girl, while Mark covered up the dead and put away his vestments. Then with a promise to send some one at once to prepare the woman for the last rites, Sydney and Mark went out together, and silently were passing down

the stairs, when, as they reached the landing one story above the street, they heard violent sobbing and crying from within a room, the door of which stood slightly ajar.

Such sounds were Mark's duty calls, and stepping hastily to the door, he knocked, and receiving no answer but continued moans and sobs, pushed open the door and entered, followed, meekly enough, and to her own surprise, by Sydney Worthington.

With a quick, joint exclamation of surprise the pair recognized in the tawdrily clad, dishevelled girl stretched upon a bed which was fitted up with an attempt at cheap finery, the form and face of Ellen Croft.

At once Sydney shrank back, and Ellen, rising at the moment, saw the sudden movement of repulsion, and flung herself down upon the bed again in an agony of shame, weeping loudly.

It was an embarrassing moment for Mark. He scarcely knew which way to turn or what effort to make. The three were alone in the miserable room. Sydney instinctively gathered her skirts closely together, and made a motion as though to withdraw. She was tingling all over with a sense of this girl's shame. Her whole proud nature revolted at breathing the same air with the woman who had forsworn her womanhood. She seemed to be suffocating, and gasped for breath. Mark's quandary was more and more complicated, as Sydney realized in every passing moment the distance between Ellen Croft and herself.

The young man's experience of women had been varied. He had touched and had to do with all sorts and conditions, but had never before seen the two extremes touching each other as on this perplexing occasion. His first impulse was to bid Sydney withdraw. He was glad, for a moment, to see the cold hauteur come into the brown eyes and clothe the fair face. But only for a moment. The instinct of helpfulness in the man was so sensitive, that the slightest, even justifiable, lack of it in others jarred upon him.

He looked again at Ellen, and then went quickly over to her, saying, "Will you please sit down a moment, Miss Sydney? Ellen's father wants her to come home, and I have pledged myself to help him."

Sydney's heart smote her as she sank confusedly into a chair. A revulsion of feeling came as she saw Winthrop bending over the sobbing girl,—the girl whose girlhood was stained with a black stain,—soothing her gently and begging her to sit up and talk with him.

"I came from your father, Ellen. I saw him not two hours ago. He sent for you. He wants you to come back. Your mother——"

"Mother!" broke from the girl's lips. "Oh, I dare not go back! I daren't face my mother. She sent me out! She brought me to this! She told me never to come back! She has cursed me long ago, I know. Oh! oh! oh! And you,—you hate me,—I know you, Miss Worthington,—you despise me." The girl's eyes flashed resentfully through her despair and sorrow, as, not heed-

ing the hushing of Winthrop's voice or the detaining gesture of his hand, Ellen burst out at the proud woman, who trembled before her and looked helplessly and pleadingly at Mark.

"You despise me! Oh, yes, I can see it in your eyes. You wouldn't touch me with your dress! I'm a vile thing to *you!* But what do *you* know of it? You've always had what you wanted. *You* never knew what it was to long for bright things and happy things in your life,—you've always had 'em. You never knew what it was to wish for kind words and kisses at home. What do *you* know of a girl's life who sees such as *you*, no better than herself, drive by her in carriages and splash mud on her with the wheels? You've *had* everything *you* want! Even *he*," pointing to Mark, "loves *you*."

Temporary confusion was visible at this point on Mark's face, and a pale, cold stare of disdain on Sydney's, which gave the young man a pain about the heart to see.

"P'raps you'd have done as I've done if you'd been as I've been! Oh, God! what *have* I done, what *am* I now?" And poor Ellen threw herself again upon the bed, as Mark walked over to Sydney and said, quite calmly,—

"Perhaps you had better go now. I will get her over this passion, and either bring her father here or take her home myself. She cannot be left alone, now that she's found again, poor child! poor child!"

"I will stay, Mr. Winthrop. I am ashamed of my first impulse to go. The poor thing is crazy, and no

wonder. Do you go after her father, and I will wait here. I mean it. Let me have my way once more," she continued, as Mark paused, doubtful of the propriety of such a course. Second thoughts made him acquiesce.

"You are always right, Miss Sydney. I will be back within an hour." And the young man went out on his errand, while Sydney unfastened the clasp of her cloak and, throwing it carelessly over a chair, sat down upon the bed beside the convulsively sobbing girl.

The first moment of the pure heart's aversion was over, the just anger of outraged womanhood was softened, and the warm heart filled with pity as the brown eyes filled with tears,—the eyes and heart of a white-souled woman brought face to face for the first time with a fact which had ever puzzled her to account for its existence.

At first she said little, and only held in a tight clasp the fluttering, feverish hand of the other, who almost angrily sought to withdraw it. Gradually the storm of passion was subdued in Ellen Croft's sore bosom, and then Sydney lay down beside her, stroking the hot forehead, wiping with her dainty handkerchief the bitter tears from the sad eyes. And then the inspiration came to sound the depths of this sister woman's sorrow, and to pour healing into her wounds.

It was the old story, that she drew out sentence by sentence, painfully, from the trembling girl. Betrayed by a promise of marriage and the fancied gift of freedom, then left like a broken plaything,—broken was this

plaything indeed. Tenderly ministered Sydney of her virtue to this girl. Solemnly she spoke of the place of repentance still open for her. Gently she spoke of her father's mighty sorrow and her mother's grieving love. It did not take her long to discover that her mother was the stumbling-block in the way of this waif's return.

"Her curse has been in my ears night and day," wailed Ellen. "She loathes me now. She told me this would happen, when I never dreamed of it or thought of it. What will she say now? Oh, father loves me, I know. Father would forgive me. But mother, she cannot! she will not! I want to die! I want to die, and go,—oh, God, where will I go? where will I go?"

Hushed and gentle as a mother crooning over a baby was Sydney's voice as she sought to quiet the fears of Ellen Croft. She did not know Mrs. Croft, but she felt that such an experience as hers must have transformed the nature of any human being. Mark had dropped enough to assure her that she was entirely warranted in telling Ellen that her mother was waiting for her, and longing to hold her to her breast again.

The half-crazed girl's doubts were not all laid, but her heart was softened a little, while they waited the coming of the father towards whom the daughter's soul was going out, while yet her body shrank from the contact.

Finally, quick springing steps were heard, the door was flung open, and in burst Robert Croft, followed more

slowly, yet with sympathetic excitement, by the rector of St. Mary's.

"My baby! my baby!" the strong man cried, hugging closely to his heart the fluttering, shrinking form. "Oh, my Ellen! my baby girl! Back again, back again, thank God! My baby! my baby!"

Over and over again the endearing words rolled from his trembling lips. Utterly heart-broken, storm-beaten, and weary, the girl gave herself up to her father's embrace. Mark and Sydney turned away, and with wet eyes whispered to each other, standing by the dusky window, looking down upon the busy street, alive now with people hurrying home in the dim twilight from their work.

For many minutes the father hungrily sobbed over and kissed the lamb that was lost and was found again. He forgot Mark, Sydney he had not seen, and now he ignored everything but the baby Ellen, stroking her face with tender hands, devouring her form with eager eyes. Oh, no, this man did not see the mark of a crime upon her. He felt no repulsion, he was conscious of no stain.

"Now we will go home, Ellen," he said, at last. "Put on your things, dear," looking around vaguely after them. "We will go home. Mother is waiting for us, dear. Mother wants to see us coming home together."

"Mother!" again the wild, despairing cry from Ellen's lips that cut like a knife to Robert Croft's heart.

Wistfully and eagerly, almost abjectly, he went on:

"Mother wants you, Ellen, don't you understand? Wants her baby Ellen,—is looking for us and waiting for us. She's at the window watching for us now, I'll warrant, just as though she could see us in the dark," laughing tremulously. "It is your own mother, my dear. She loves you now as I love you. She's been sick for a sight of your bonny face. Come, dear, come! There, I'll help you." And not a step from her side would Robert Croft move, as she went about the room, shuddering now at sight of its cheap ornaments, and taking nothing from it but the little hat and cloak she had worn on that fatal evening.

Together they went down into the street, leaving Sydney and Mark to follow, which they did at once and in silence, saying never a word to each other until they parted at the door of the Worthington residence, and then it was only a simple good-night on either side that broke the silence.

Sydney's head was ringing with the words of Ellen Croft, "Even he loves you," so she was more conscious of herself and of her possession of a heart on this evening than ever before. There was a shy defiance in her voice that Mark was quick to recognize. He went back to his hotel to con over the letter of his college friend. He read and re-read, and finally reached the conclusion that, for a time at least, he would see less of Sydney Worthington, or control the feelings of his heart. Did he not know that love is a master, and not a servant? That we may say we will, or we will not, and when the

test comes, love proves stronger than man or woman's will power.

Robert Croft and Ellen went home together. The girl's step grew slower, and her heart failed her more and more, as they turned down the familiar street that led to the story and a half cottage-house, which seemed to-night to Robert Croft like the palace of a king.

Inside the cottage, the table was set for three. A pale woman sat by the plain cooking-stove, which was all their limited means allowed for both heat and use. A changed woman was Mrs. Croft from that night when her husband came home to find his child a wanderer. A changed woman in many, many ways. Older, very much older. She felt that the curses she had called down upon husband and child were fallen upon herself and turned her older than her years. She accepted the fact humbly, even gratefully. Her real nature had been for long time dammed up by disappointments and frozen over by the constant chilling iteration of her griefs. Through the lurid light that rose before her from the pit of her daughter's shame she began to see dimly how mistaken she had been,—how unfair to the reality of her own nature, how bitterly unfair to her own husband and child. Words and actions long uttered and performed started out upon the pages of life she was reading with terrible distinctness. It was not in the nature of Robert Croft's wife to say much in her present frame of mind. The result of her brooding came out plainly enough in her altered mode of life. Croft knew without

words that the lesson of life had been learned at last. But at what a terrible cost! In those lonely days of anxious waiting, and fear, and hopes deferred, the man and wife drew very closely together, who for twenty years had been lying side by side and living different lives.

The weary struggle against poverty was overshadowed now by the loss, and the manner of the loss, of Ellen. Together they had mourned, and hoped against hope. Robert never left his wife alone more than his work made it necessary, and there was not enough of that to make his periods of absence very many or very long.

Now, with a heart beating trip-hammer blows, breath that would scarcely come, eyes moist with the overflowing of years of unshed tears, the mother waited for her child. Waited with a dread as great as her longing,—a dread as great as that shining in the dilated eyes of the girl, who tightens her clasp of the father's arm convulsively as the door swings open—inward.

"Ellen, mother! our baby, back again! Kiss her as you kissed her once, dear heart! Poor thing! she's very tired." And almost jealously Robert Croft consigned his daughter to the first mother's embrace she had felt for many and many a year.

Open were the mother's arms; timidly the child sought them, fearfully she looked up in the face she had learned to dread. But what she read there was so blessed to her hungry and weary heart, that the tears of relief

rolled down from eyes that had been scared and hunted eyes till now.

Ellen Croft was home again. Long after, but not for many months, she talked it over with her mother,—that step out into the dark. It seemed to them like a dream, for the little baby died in the first week of its life, and as its grave grew green in the spring and summer, the scars of its birth healed over. Ellen Croft died the other day in a yellow fever hospital, died bravely, with the blood-red emblem of the Geneva Cross upon her simple dress,—over a heart that had beaten in sympathy with many sorrows, the more tenderly perhaps for the buried sorrow of her own young life.

So near are heaven and hell in the lives of all of us. So fine the dividing line and narrow the bridge between them.

CHAPTER XVII.

A WOMAN'S HEART AND A MAN'S OPINIONS.

THE next day but one to that on which Ellen Croft was restored, penitent and welcome, to her mother's arms, Mark Winthrop and Sydney Worthington walked home together from the funeral of the negro woman.

That scene in the shabby-genteel room of the tenement-house was still very vivid before Sydney's eyes. She

was questioning herself now. Did she have any vital interest in Mark Winthrop's opinions on the state of marriage? As she walked by the side of the young man, touching him accidentally now and then, and shooting a swift side-glance at the grave face from time to time, she was forced to acknowledge that something had come into her life which never had been before in her experience,—something sweet and strange. It seemed odd to Sydney that she of all women should be so sensitive of the mere presence of this man. Her whole life heretofore had been so different. All her plans of life had been along such entirely different lines.

The bright, graceful girl had been flitting along on the surface of society, having her depths of experience too, but keeping them to herself. She was much courted and flattered, as belles are. Not a flirt, not even a coquette, and yet so charming in her ways, that men gathered about her bewitched, knowing how far she was beyond their reach. Many a brave-hearted young fellow nursed a passion for Sydney Worthington, and felt himself the nobler and better for it, although he realized its utter hopelessness.

If Sydney Worthington was not this very moment in love with Mark Winthrop, she was dangerously near it. And she felt, too, that he could never be any nearer to her than he was to hundreds of others. He was wedded to his work. His bride was the church. Sydney thought this all out shyly to herself, and decided that it were better so. He was doing so much in his calling,

reaching out with ever-lengthening influence over so great a number of people, that for him marriage seemed almost sacrilege. It was a beautiful idea, too, this solitary life for the sake of his work; this giving up of the joys and comforts of a home. It seemed a grand thing, the turning one's back on life's pleasures the better to soothe life's pains. Probably even the thought of matrimony never entered the young clergyman's mind, Sydney reflected, as she glanced up at the serious eyes, and dropped her own swiftly enough, finding that he was regarding her with a look she could not interpret.

Soberly enough they walked on. Perhaps the quiet burial service over the remains of the negro woman had solemnized them both. But Mark was certainly thinking more of the afternoon's companion than of the afternoon's employment. The conclusion he had reached two days before was far from setting his mind at rest. When a young man concludes to see less of a young woman because between them is any real or fancied bar, the young man should take several things into account, one very important one being his power of moral endurance, and the other no less important one, the young woman herself.

Mark had overrated his self-control, and underrated the strength of love which a nature such as Sydney Worthington's inspires. He had thought himself strongly intrenched behind the pamphlet he had written a few years before, on the beauty and duty of a celibate life for the clergy. One year's knowledge of Sydney Worth-

ington had made the pamphlet waste-paper, and its arguments barren and hollow. What St. Jerome, or St. Anybody thought, was fast becoming a matter of perfect indifference. No saint ever lived, he thought, who would not have rejoiced in, and been lifted up by, the love of this peerless woman.

When a professed celibate reaches the point of debating his position, he is like a woman who hesitates. Mark was conning over the arguments he had launched upon the world in his pamphlet now, as he walked beside Sydney Worthington and met the bright eyes upturned to his. Neither of them knew how thin was the partition-wall between them, so thin that the faintest whisper would have pierced, but each thought the wall very thick and uttered no sound.

Mark went in to dinner that day, a thing he did not very often do, having a theory that the less he tasted of the flesh-pots the easier would be his sojourn among the leeks. To-night, however, he accepted the cordial invitation, and when, after a cigar, Phil took himself off to the club, Mark found himself, very contentedly for a man who had concluded to see less of a certain woman's society, enjoying that woman's charms in the cosey library before the open fire.

Sydney watched the fire, and Mark watched Sydney, neither saying very much for a long time. He wondered to himself how this girl managed to fit her gowns so well. There was apparently nothing studied about the effect, yet every bit of the dainty costume, from the lace

at the throat to the tiny boot-tips resting becomingly on the fender, seemed touched with the wearer's personality. Sydney had the art of dressing which not one woman in a hundred has. Consequently she was a beautiful picture from the moment she came down to breakfast until she took her bedroom candle.

Mark thought this as he sat there watching the fire-light play over the proud face. He thought back to the first time he had ever seen her. At one evening service in St. Mary's Chapel the bright face and luminous eyes had attracted his glance in such contrast with their dull and commonplace surroundings. The clergyman's words were eloquent that night, and Sydney came again with the friends by whom she had first been tempted to leave St. Jude's fashionable congregation on one of the broad avenues of the city.

Gradually she found that she was nearer her ideal of worship in the little chapel among the poor and plain people than in St. Jude's. The first she knew she had taken a class in the Sunday-school, and had induced others of her set to take up work with this solitary man, who had turned away from the purple and fine linen of life and given himself up to looking after Lazarus at the gate.

Mark eagerly welcomed his new assistants, looking upon them as so many instruments, nothing more, nothing less. With his high ideas of the priestly life, he laughed to scorn the idea of marriage, and the farthest he wandered from his principles at first, was to admit

after a while, that to a man who could not give up the joys of marriage for the greater joy and wider blessedness of celibacy, Sydney Worthington was a prize worth winning. Slowly he grew to look for the one face in his congregation. On the very stormy days when he looked in vain, he was conscious of a disappointment, for which he took himself severely to task.

As her voice came to him over the heads of the people singing between, rich and round and full, he was aware of a new beauty and a new help in the age-old chants and hymns he had heard from childhood. When he found himself actually scribbling a certain name, found in no hagiology, on the edge of his sermon paper, he acknowledged that Sydney Worthington was a temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and manfully did he pray to be led away from it. He reiterated to himself the arguments of his precious pamphlet, and refreshed himself by an occasional reading of it, after which, for as much as an hour, he thought of Sydney Worthington with the same lofty indifference that characterized his intercourse with the other lambs of his flock. Then followed more or less intimacy at the Worthington house, with the results which the intelligent reader has long ago foreseen.

"How are the plans for the new mill coming on, Miss Sydney?" Thus a long silence was broken.

"Slowly indeed! It is so vexing, when one's mind is set upon accomplishing something, to be bound and hampered by the slowness of others, who only make a

mere matter of business what is one's own vital happiness."

"Perhaps it is the point of view, and that your impatience runs too fast for ordinary people to keep step."

"It may be; but now they keep telling me that it will be quite a whole year before the mill would be ready. A year seems such a very long time." And the mill proprietor in embryo sighed.

"Yet a year is a short time enough," returned the other, meditatively, thinking of the year that had passed since he first knew the face opposite him, the face warm and tender in the fire-glow. "I suppose, though, that too depends upon one's point of view. My years pass very quickly."

"They are so full, though," impulsively cried Sydney. "That makes the difference. My life is such an empty one. Balls and dinner-parties and receptions and novels, that is the index I seem bound to write as each year closes. It is not a thrilling one."

"Nothing more than that? You are unjust to yourself, Miss Sydney, which is as wrong as being unjust to others. I am sure that many of my humble people at the chapel bless your work among them during this year at all events. I know myself to be genuinely grateful for many things. You have lightened my labors again and again."

"Oh, Mr. Winthrop, I am glad to hear you say that; glad and sorry, if you can understand. Sorry that it is

not in me to do more,—that I lived so long without doing anything. I have thought sometimes that it is not all the fault of the fashionable girls as we are called, butterflies, and all that. We are petted and pampered and sheltered, and told to be good, and to dress well and look pretty, and that is all of our duty. The moment a woman leaves the beaten track of social prejudices she is laughed at, and called strong-minded or something of the kind. She is just frightened back into the traces, and that is one reason of our general utilitarian debility, as the bright novelists call it. Very few clergymen in such parishes as St. Jude's would say to the young women of their congregations what you said once; it burned me with shame, and I have always remembered even the very words."

Here she quoted what Mark very well remembered to have said before he knew Sydney very well, but with her and others of her class in mind:

"'I say to those people whose time hangs heavy on their hands, or who occupy it in trifling follies, well enough as the dessert, but not fit for the substantials of life, use some of this time in the streets of this very city in becoming the apostles of cleanliness, of decency, of order, of sympathy, and you will be doing Christ service if you never mention his name. It may seem a little service and a mean one, but it is divine service none the less. It levels the hills, and fills up the valleys in preparation for the advent of the Master into lives which, but for that effort, would never know, *could*

never know, what it is to be subject unto the higher powers.'"

Mark listened in astonishment. He did not know that this message of his had been written down on the leaf of Sydney's prayer-book as it was spoken, conned over every day almost, and taken from the moment of its utterance as the inspiration of her life. Now as she recited it, nothing of his own composition ever seemed so fine and eloquent. The tract on celibacy was ignominiously and forever retired to the background.

"Now as to this co-operation factory. I have set my heart upon it, and all my friends are laughing at me."

"Not all, Miss Sydney. Such a thing is the one hope, to my mind, of bringing about a state of affairs that will forever prevent outbursts like the strike and the burning of Richard Wilton's house. When all employers are working-men, and all working-men employers; when men learn to work together, interchanging each other's talents and opportunities; then, while we will not have Arcadia, we will not have so many riots, or almshouses, or prisons. It is the pull together, with mutual interests, that accomplishes the best work, the most successful work of the world. Why should it not be tried between capital and labor?"

Mark looked very handsome, Sydney thought, as his fine eyes flashed and the earnest lines about his mouth tightened.

"Mutual interests, yes," assented Sydney, mechani-

cally. Winthrop started at the tone, and, shading his face from the firelight, looked eagerly into the eyes that were a little deeper in hue to-night, he thought, than he had seen them before.

"People are able to accomplish so much more together than alone," he ventured again, scanning the proud face before him for the sign the proud heart would not give, though it was beating against a throbbing bosom and tugging at the leash of womanly reserve.

"Yes, in some things," assented Sydney.

Now was a supreme moment for the Reverend Mark Winthrop. Deliberately to himself he disavowed the principles that had been strongest in his ascetic mind. Calmly he put away from him the authorship of his pamphlet. Loftily he scorned the immature opinions of his early study of life.

It was a very great fall, and Mark let himself down as easily as possible, by pleading at the bar of conscience his ignorance of the world before Sydney Worthington had begun to teach him some of its more important lessons. Now after all this struggle with himself, and a victory over the stubbornest of all enemies, one's own pet prejudices, Mark suddenly felt all his confident strength giving way. It came to him with a rush of great longing for the girl before him,—what if she were not so minded? Now that he had broken through the barriers on his own side, others, higher and wider, seemed to rise before him in the pride, the magnificence,

the rare, rare heart of Sydney Worthington. He had mentally torn up the celibate tract, to realize that his own opinions upon the subject of marriage were not the only ones to be considered. What if, after all, Sydney did not care for him—in *that* way? She had never given him the slightest sign, so far as his apprehension went, of more than a very warm, friendly interest. What else could she do indeed? Mark thought, regretfully, as he remembered the high stand he had taken, and the long passages he had quoted from musty authorities, to prove that a priest of the church must not entangle himself with the things of the world, or his work would suffer. What an utterly absurd and stupid theory it seemed now, as seen under the light of the brown eyes looking wistfully into the fire, as though longing to see answers to vexing questions written there! Mark knew that he loved Sydney Worthington; knew that her silent presence meant more to him than all the world's smiles and laughter and applause. But what was he, to win such a woman? What was there in a parish priest, of a humble quarter of the town, for the toasted beauty of the fashionable clubs, the leading belle of a select circle, to find of worth, or more than passing interest? Mark almost groaned aloud as he felt the wide difference between them. She seemed very far off to him now, while close by his side. He love Sydney Worthington? As well a baby love a sunbeam, so far as love demands possession. Yet he could not feel quite hopeless. There is a divine egotism mixed up with

every mighty passion, which demands for self, if nothing more, at the least, a right of assertion.

Mark felt this much, that his love was a noble thing, and worth declaring, if it met only repulsion. Yet as he looked again at the graceful creature before him, noting the haughty arch of the slender neck, the proud curve of the sensitive mouth, his heart sank within him. Yet love ennobled him, and the declaration of it he was in honor bound to make. It was surely the right of this princess to know of the homage she compelled.

"It is a great thing for a woman to attempt this plan of yours, Miss Sydney, feasible as I believe it to be; yet you will need help too." This was Mark's first advance towards the end he had determined,—a very lame one he felt. Then he coughed slightly. It is a great relief to clear one's throat in an emergency.

"Oh, yes; and I will have it, I am sure. Two or three of Phil's friends are quite enthusiastic over it; Phil himself is a host. Mr. Kincaid has promised his assistance in the *Herald*, and——"

"I seem to be the only one left out of your plans," interrupted Mark, with a little tugging ache at his heart, feeling that he was indeed no part of Sydney's life or purpose.

"You! oh, yes!" confusedly, and not looking at the injured Mark. She had caught a tone in his voice, the faintest far-off indication of what lay throbbing so madly back of his words. How quick is love to feel the inton-

ation of love! Sydney felt it, and for a moment heart, soul, and body shivered under the delicious music. It was almost pain, the keen pleasure thrilling her, to know what the delicate perception and intuition of the woman now perceived. She could only say, not knowing *what* she said,—

"You! of course *you* will help; I—I counted on that, you know!"

"People need so much, not only actual physical support, but sympathy, appreciation, a quick response to their wishes before even uttering them. Is it not so?"

Mark was very well aware that this was only commonplace, and very average commonplace at that. But love is blind to triteness as to all else, and Sydney, thinking it a very beautiful sentiment, answered,—

"It is the very thing that makes life better worth living I think, to know that your words and acts are interpreted aright by those you—have any regard for—or connection with."

"One sees so many solitary people in the world," murmured Mark; "I wonder if hermits ever think of what they deprive others as well as themselves by selfishly walking in single paths?"

Sydney thought so.

"And yet," he went on, apologizing to himself for his past life, "it comes to many as a duty, I can well understand it. When one gives himself to work that can occupy every waking moment, draw upon every spark of latent fire, use every whit of reserve force, then it seems

natural that such an one should think it best to walk by himself, however much inclination called him aside. The very renunciation, does it not make one stronger?"

"Oh, yes!" Sydney thought she was reading Mark's innermost thoughts. She thought she saw him nailed, as it were, between duty to his sacred calling and love —oh, blessed, blessed thought!—love for her. She thought she saw him before her, longing for her, yet beating the longing down, and fiercely fighting his love. She thought she saw all this, and yet could give no sign. Strong within her, well she knew, was the power of drawing him, not indelicately, not in an unwomanly way, but of forcing him to give up everything that stood between them by the very mightiness of her love. She loved him. She knew that he loved her, but she thought he was trying to beat love back for the sake of duty. Was she the one, then, with her high notions of honor, to stand as a temptation between the man she dearly loved and the duty that beckoned him from her side? Because she dearly loved him she would bid good-by to him in her heart. He was to be great, to do great things, to be a leader and a master among men. He had said in almost so many words that he could do this better alone. What a tangle life was! Sydney pressed her hands together tightly, ever so tightly.

"Yes," she said again, "renunciation makes one stronger in the end, I do not doubt; but in the moment of it—do you not think that the hearts strong enough to renounce are weak enough to bleed—a little—at first?"

Whatever possessed the girl to go on she could not have told, but she did hurriedly,—"And then the things and the people renounced,—perhaps they suffer too. But that makes no difference, does it? Great work must be done any way, must it not? Yes, I suppose that renunciation is the gospel of greatness, yet it seems hard—hard——"

Sydney had forgotten that a woman can tell her secrets with her eyes, if other eyes that watch are quick with love. She had forgotten, too, that the voice is a base betrayer of its owner oftentimes. She had forgotten the calmness of face and pride of bearing that won for her the title of Sydney the superb. She was looking so intently straight into the fire, without even seeing the curl of a single flame, that she did not notice the start Mark gave, nor the gladness growing in his face, the wonder of delight that tingled every nerve. Of only one thing was she thinking,—that she loved him, and he loved her, and they must part to-night. Never to be the same to each other again. This was her thought. Oh, yes, it was better, and she was willing. Willing to have him go away from her. Willing to hear the voice, to touch the hand, to feel the masterful influence,—and know that a thousand others have the same right and the same privilege. She rose to her feet and stood before the fire, her face half turned away from Mark; stood with her hands clasped before her, her head throbbing, the chords of her heart sore. She mutinied with fate even then. Was it kind or was it cruel, this love

sent to her, laid at her feet, which she could not take? There seemed no room left in her life for anything save this new-found idolatry. What would be there with the idol torn out? Why, it seemed to her, standing there, trying ever so hard to find something to say, something that would clear the choking in her throat,—it seemed that she could not spare a clasp of the hand, a look, a softened word to another; all, every breath, must be hers, as all she had was his. And all the time she was thinking of what she would say to break this horrible silence.

Mark had been waiting: not in doubt any longer, but actually lost in bewilderment that this had come to pass. Then before Sydney knew, before she had time to draw back, Mark's arm was about her waist, Mark's hand held hers closely in his own, Mark's voice, low and thrilling with his great joy, was in her ears,—

"Sydney, my love, my dear, dear heart!"

And never a word said Sydney, but nestled closer to the throbbing bosom, feeling safe and satisfied in the strong arms. And so they stood for a little. What words they whispered you and I have no right to know. Imagine what you please. Love's language is an unknown tongue except between two lovers, as it ought to be.

And now that the meeting point is passed, what a torrent of wonder and explanation there is between them! A curious thing this coming together of two people, between whom the magnetic signals have been flashing

unknown perhaps to themselves. As far apart as the poles one moment, the next fused and annealed by equatorial heat. The parsons insist that marriage begins when they finish reading out of a book, but this I am convinced is only a crafty scheme on their part to secure fees. Mark and Sydney will have been married a long time, and the process will be even then by no means ended, when they walk down out of St. Mary's Chapel, followed by the Episcopal benediction.

How this couple compared notes of the past I have neither patience to relate nor space in which to write. They lived over again the days when they distinguished each other as Miss Sydney and Mr. Winthrop. They filled up the empty crevices of their past hours with the overflowing of their present love. Of course they confessed to have loved each other at first sight. All wise lovers confess that.

"But what did you find in *me*, Mark?" queried Sydney, shyly, and wistfully even, for the twentieth time. "I am frivolous and foolish and fond of trifles. It was long, long before I could even dream that you thought of me except as a miserable sinner, like the other girls, who spent too much time at dinner-parties. You seemed, in your work, so far off from me. I cannot see you now in the chancel without trembling to think how much higher and better you are than poor me. Then I never thought you would think of love as a part of your life. Oh, dear heart, I will not spoil your life, will I? Indeed, indeed, I know that I can help

you,—side by side, and hand in hand. You have not left your duty in coming to me, dear,—I will not take you from that,—but, my darling, I must go with you, I must go with you."

Mark's protestations were music to Sydney. The way in which he repudiated the duties and beauties of celibacy was positively shameless. In some confusion he told Sydney of that fatal tract, and while she graciously consented to excuse it as a boyish freak, her mind was privately made up to burn every copy she could find when she came into her kingdom.

"Do not say frivolous, Sydney dear," protested the lover, to Sydney's reiterated plaints of her own unworthiness. "Think of this great thing you are going to do with your money."

"*We* are going to do, dear," with a shining tenderness in the brown eyes, grown browner with love's alchemy in the last hour. "Yes, I had forgotten that, though."

Mark's hand stroked the soft warm cheek and did not reprove such a disgraceful forgetfulness.

It was no fault of Philip Worthington's that he should have entered the house quietly that evening, and made his way softly to the library. Indeed, it was very thoughtful of him, for he supposed that Sydney was asleep, and he would not awaken her. Therefore it happened that he came in upon a couple of people so occupied in each other, that Mr. Philip was put in full possession of the state of affairs before a word had been spoken. "Ah, co-operation, I suppose,—practical fruits

and all that!" This was Phil's remark. Brothers will be so brutal.

Sydney tried to start up, and made the attempt. Mark rose with her, and, putting his arm about her, drew her very close to him. There was nothing under the circumstances for Sydney to do but to drop her head upon his shoulder and leave to him such explanations as might seem necessary.

"Yes, Phil, co-operation. Sydney has given herself to me. It is a great gift," he said, solemnly and tenderly, smoothing the brown hair and tightening the clasp in which he held his love,—"a great and rare gift. I pray God I may be worthy of it." Phil was really and honestly glad. He knew Mark thoroughly, and Sydney as well as a brother ever knows a sister, and he felt that they were fitted for each other.

He must show it, however, in his own way, and he began now, in a severe tone,—

"All very well, I suppose, for you two to settle this matter between you, without referring to this young woman's guardian. What if I decline to give my consent? I feel just now that the part of heavy father is well adapted to me. Come, Miss Worthington, how dare you make love to this——"

"Oh, Phil, what a shame!" And Sydney covered her face, dyed deep with blushes. Mark thought the coloring very becoming.

"I persist, Miss Worthington. You are robbing the church of an ornament. You are depriving the flock

of a shepherd. You have been deceiving your affectionate brother all along. I suppose now your precious scheme of co-operation has never gone in your mind beyond the co-operation of the rector. Tell me," in tragic tones, "am I deceived? What's to become of the factory?"

"You are a goose, Phil," said Sydney, laughing. How lightly and freely her heart eased itself in laughter now!

"Don't be absurd, Phil. Congratulate us and then go to bed," cried Mark.

"Congratulate you! deluded man that you are. On second thoughts, you may have her. I give my full and free consent. And after a somewhat varied experience of four-and-twenty years, Mark, I warn you to look out. I have gotten used to it. I could go on bearing the burden——"

"Oh, never mind him, Mark!"

"Mark indeed! Oh, it's all of a piece! I suppose I'm to be bullied again. I was bullied into a day-nursery, bullied into a ragged school, bullied into an absurd wood-yard for able-bodied tramps, bullied into wild nihilistic schemes for the amelioration of oppressed labor, now I'm to be bullied into this. Forsooth, I'm to be 'never minded.' Heaven knows what next! But I warn you both that I draw the line some day. I will forgive all that is past, I will even say, Bless you, my children, and give Mark a box of cigars, but, so help me heaven, I will not hire out as a day-laborer in your wretched factory, and I will *never* become a vestry-

man. There are levels below which even I will not descend."

Sydney fled finally to her own room, glorified by her assured new happiness. Mark's good-night whisper lingered long in her ears, and when sleep came at last, it was full of beautiful dreams, as young love's sleep should be.

"God bless you, old fellow!" were Phil's good-night words to the happy Mark, wringing his hand with brotherly affection. "You've won a real woman, and she has won a real man. God bless you both!"

Mark went home crowned by his love and radiant. The little corner room high up in the crowded hotel was neither low nor narrow to him this night, though both in reality. The master of such a heart as that of Sydney Worthington's could look beyond four walls for his kingdom. Never again to him would any place be small. His love widened and enlarged the horizon from whatever point he viewed it.

Philip Worthington turned back to the solitary fire, and wondered if he were the only one in this world to whom the crowning gladness of life was forbidden. He went to his private desk, and took out a bundle of faded letters, tied about with a faded ribbon. These he read over again, as he had hundreds of times, and put them back, reverently and quietly, as one kisses the dead.

For this brave-hearted, light-speaking Phil Worthington had lived his romance in the old college days, and the song of his love was hushed under the waving

trees in the quiet graveyard of his college town. The stars looking down upon the simple headstone caught up the name inscribed there, and whispered it to-night across the cold sky, until from star to star it passed, and fell from one to the heart of the lonely man sitting beside the fire in the lonely room that love had filled with gladness but an hour before.

And the whisper comforted.

He looked forward, this man whom few would call religious, forward to the grand eternities, where the unmarried wife of his heart was waiting and watching for him. Oh, blessed hope and knowledge that lies wrapped up in Immortality! A hope and knowledge as bright and blessed as any the preachers give us. There will the lives unite that have drifted asunder here. Old loves that the world-life has killed, old ties that the earth-life has broken, will be resurrected and rejoined. Souls that to-night cannot intertwine their tendrils with each other, nor speak the "God keep thee" of love across the gaps of fate, or the graves of shame and sorrow and death, in that long evolution of immortality will recognize and be recognized, will know as they are known, and grow together only for good, forever and forever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRIAL.

THE day of John Sherwood's trial came on. He had resigned his position of trust in the bank, but the directors, of whom Phil Worthington was one, declined to receive it, but gave him leave of absence until his innocence of the charge against him should be made as clear in the sight of all men as it was in the minds of his friends.

In the gloomy-looking court-house was gathered a great throng that morning. Sherwood had many friends, and these were out in force. There was the usual group of court-room loungers. Men who fattened on the moral and immoral dissection of criminal evidence; who shook their heads wisely at all the telling points in the speeches; who knew the sheriff and his deputies, and called the watchful constable "old boy." They were on intimate terms with the faces of the leading lawyers also, and very few judges appeared on that majestic bench whose decisions had not been weighed in the balance with indifferent results by this self-constituted court of appeal, which, term after term, were diligent in the zeal with which they clung to the court-room benches.

Many of the late strikers were in court that morning.

They had a friendly feeling for Sherwood, and whether he was guilty or not of the charge against him, it made very little difference to them. That he had been in the forefront of the mob that night, and had brought a woman safe out of the jaws of death, was quite enough in their estimation to entitle him to their more or less valuable moral support.

Philip Worthington sat within the bar in consultation with the eminent counsellor who had been retained in John's defence. This eminent counsellor was solemn enough to-day. He was running for Congress in that district, and it was a question in his great mind how he could turn his speech for the accused into political capital for himself. He intended to bring in something about the recent great uprising of labor for the assertion of its heaven-born rights; yet he was bound to repudiate, as gently as possible, the sacking and destruction of property as in any sense a legitimate mode of procuring said rights. He felt himself, did Colonel Mansfield, to be in rather a tight place, for the district attorney, opposed to him in this case, was likewise on the other side in politics.

The bland judge smiled to himself as he watched these two legal bull-terriers glaring nervously at each other before the trial began, and thought of the beautiful opportunities for judicial snubbing that were sure to arise before the day was over.

Margaret was not there, by John's special request and against her own earnest protest, for she had determined

to stand by her lover to the end, and before all the world show that one woman thought the more of him for the accusation against him. But John had overruled this, and Margaret sat at home, having given up her school to a substitute that day. Children were very sweet and lovely objects at all times, and she loved her little band of pupils dearly, with the warm maternity all good women feel, even before the reality comes to them. But to-day, with John in the prisoner's chair, she could not have taught angels; so she bided at home, starting at every sound outside, nervously sensitive to every footfall on the pavement.

Richard Wilton was at the trial of course. The lapse of days without hearing anything of the stolen box had quieted his fears somewhat. Had it been discovered he was convinced he would have heard of it long since. He began to think of it as battered and destroyed, with all its written testimony against him, in the fire that had destroyed his house. The rioters had done him this service at all events, of making way with the skeleton which he had never been able of himself to dash to pieces. So long as he held the box and retained its contents, as though some day he might restore it, so long the voice of the dead sounded less accusingly in his ears. So he kept it, fascinated by it, as men so often are by the place or thing they hate most and wish most to be rid of.

Silently and morosely he sat beside the district attorney, not daring to lift his eyes across the table to John

Sherwood, calmly and contemptuously regarding his former employer.

The usual scene of drawing a jury began the trial. That palladium of our republican liberties shone brightly forth on this occasion. Mr. Howard Millbank, a large mill-owner and an intelligent gentleman, was summarily rejected because he had read the papers and formed an opinion. Billy Sanford, red as to his eyes and groggy as to the general aspect of his outer man, was eagerly accepted because he had read the papers and knew nothing whatever about the matter. This latter was the order of intelligence demanded by counsel on both sides, before which to plead their respective causes.

These preliminaries being settled, and the honorable counsel having indulged in many glowering looks and emanations of professional billingsgate, to the no small enjoyment of the audience, the trial proceeded.

It was all one-sided. Wilton swore that on the night in question he was wakened from a doze by the cries of fire. Immediately afterwards the door of his library had been burst open, and half a dozen men rushed in. Two ladies entered about the same time, guests in the house, who rushed down to him for protection. One of the men he recognized in the prisoner at the bar. He had seen him pick up a box containing valuable papers and make off with it in the crowd. That was all.

"Has my friend any questions to put to the witness?" politely growled the district attorney.

"Yes, we'll try to make it pleasant for him for a brief

season," cheerfully responded the eminent counsel for the defence.

"Mr. Wilton!" here the eminent counsel bent a fierce look over his gold spectacles at Richard Wilton, who stood nervously shifting from one foot to the other, glancing up furtively now and then at the jury, and now throwing an alarmed look of appeal at the district attorney.

"Mr. Wilton!" The voice was enough to disconcert one who was conscious of the truthfulness of his position. It seemed like the crack of doom to this wretched man who had perjured himself. For a moment he regretted Sherwood's arrest. But it was too late for that now. Besides, no one could *know* anything. The box must be destroyed. His hate grew, and he felt almost triumphant, as he looked more boldly, and yet with a sneaking terror in his heart, at the face of the honorable counsellor, who was thinking almost as much of him as he was of votes at that particular moment.

"What was in this box, sir?"

"The question is irrelevant," cried the opposing lawyer, jumping to his feet. He knew it was not, of course, but then a district attorney must assert himself, especially if he is a candidate for reappointment.

When the judge had taken a pinch of snuff and allowed the question, Wilton answered,—

"Private papers, of no use to any one but myself."

"No money?"

"None."

"Had the prisoner any object, do you think, in appropriating that especial box? Was there any motive you can think of?"

"He was an employé of mine before the strike, and he was so insolent——"

"That will do! Confine yourself to answering my questions, sir," said the honorable Colonel Mansfield, while the district attorney vainly endeavored to call the attention of the court to the fact that his honorable friend was violating custom in not allowing the witness to answer freely.

The court sustained John's counsel, and decided that aspersions upon the character of the accused as an employé of the Tradelawn Mills were not germane.

"I beg your honor to note an exception!" cried the district attorney in a fierce tone, which the judge with great blandness proceeded to do. Then the defender of the law for that county subsided, after throwing a look full of deep meaning at the jury, conveying the impression that the judge had been forced to make a concession, and that if Sherwood were innocent *now*, the moon was made of green cheese.

"I again beg to ask, what motive can you suggest that the prisoner may have had for abstracting that particular box?" sonorously declaimed the candidate for congressional honors.

"I black-listed him after the strike, and he wanted to injure me, I suppose," was Wilton's sullen response. Here the jury looked intelligently at each other. The

case was very plain, and the counsel for John saw that he had made a mistake. The district attorney nudged his assistant, smiled significantly, and looked offensively at his honorable friend in the gold spectacles.

"Did you see the prisoner leave your library that night with the box in his possession?" asked the latter, in a hurry to cover up his previous misstep.

"I did." With a vindictive look at Sherwood, and thinking bitterly how he *had* seen him leave the room with Margaret beside him.

"If I am correctly informed, my client saved a woman's life that night. Did my client give this woman the box to carry, or did he take it himself?"

This was uttered in a derisive tone, and caught the fancy of the crowd, which hooted approvingly. Every hoot might mean a vote, and Colonel Mansfield smiled benignantly upon the crowd, while the judge rapped for order, and Richard Wilton ground his teeth in rage.

John was moved, too. It seemed like profanity to him to bring Margaret's personality into this room, with its rough crowd and angry noises. Yet he could do nothing but breathe the sacred name softly to himself, and feel the small strong hand in his, while the sweet voice was ever whispering, "Be strong, John. Truth always lives. Only meanness and falsehood need fear anybody or anything." This was what she had said to him that morning, as he left her to become a central figure in the scene now being enacted.

"I saw the woman follow him, that is all," hoarsely answered the perjurer.

Much more followed. Trivial little disputes between the learned counsel enlivened the dry detail of examining witnesses, who were mostly uninteresting. On the part of the prosecution the testimony was mainly to the effect that Sherwood was present at Wilton's house on the night in question, and that he was conspicuous in the crowd that forced an entrance. The pale and lamb-like Williams had something to offer to the effect that Wilton and Sherwood had quarrelled, and the latter was heard since his discharge to say that the owner of the Tradelawn Mills and he would live to square accounts yet in a way that would not be pleasant for Wilton.

On Sherwood's behalf the witnesses were called to testify to his previous good character. Colonel Mansfield had insisted that Margaret should be called to bear witness to the fact that she had occupied the prisoner's attention to the exclusion of a tin box, or anything else. This he had said, poking John slyly, but the latter had received the humorous advance somewhat coldly, and Margaret, never imagining how important her testimony might be, suffered herself to be directed by John, and remained at home as we have seen.

John's own words, unsupported, told rather against than for him. He confessed his presence at the fire, admitted entering the house and the library. When asked his object in being there, he said, simply, "To save life."

"Wilton's life?" was the witty interrogation of the district attorney.

"No; a woman's life." The answer was given in a grave, steady tone, touching the easily excited crowd, which had shouted itself hoarse a moment before, at what was supposed to be John's discomfiture. A low hum of sympathy ran through the audience, speedily suppressed by the stern command of the judge.

So the long day wore on, the evidence was all in, and the counsel were gathering themselves together for the final speeches.

The district attorney was calm and cold and deliberate. He knew that in all human probability his case was won. He did not propose to weary himself with long speech-making. The summit of his momentary ambition was to irritate as far as possible his honorable friend across the baize-covered table. Throughout the trial he had persisted in this laudable enterprise. The colonel endeavored to hide his wrath, and made successful efforts at retaliation. Before the district attorney arose to sum up for the prosecution, the counsel for the defence drew out his watch and placed it in a conspicuous place on the table before him. He then drew a newspaper from his pocket, and affected to compose himself to patience and resignation. He had given up the case in his heart, and having done all he could for his stubborn client, having exhausted his quick brain of every legal technicality long practice could suggest, he felt that he could devote a portion of his own summing up for the defence

to making himself solid with the galleries, fairly bristling with votes.

As the district attorney stood up to begin his closing address, there was a diversion at the lower end of the court-room, which caused him to pause for a moment, turning an annoyed look in that direction. A district messenger boy pushed his way through the crowd and handed a note to Philip Worthington. Every eye was upon the latter as he scanned its contents hastily and whispered quickly to Colonel Mansfield. The whole aspect of the latter's face changed. He sprang to his feet, and asked the court to stay the proceedings for a few moments until he could produce an important witness whose testimony would be final. Excitement was visible on every face save that of the one most deeply concerned. So strong was the man in his consciousness of truth and innocence, that salvation even at the eleventh hour, and as it were by chance, seemed a natural result of the whole affair.

After some wrangling on the part of counsel the district attorney sniffed contemptuously, sat down ungraciously, and banged two or three ponderous books upon the floor. The excitement and exultation of the gold-spectacled Colonel Mansfield were quite in contrast with the ill humor of his adversary. The aspirant for congressional honors beamed broadly about him, smiled benignly at the prisoner, and whispered cheerfully with Philip Worthington.

The heart of one man sank within him. Richard

Wilton was stricken with the awful fear of impending calamity. The box must at last have been found. If so, into whose hands had it fallen? Wilton looked about him in desperation, and saw that he was unnoticed in the general excitement. He slipped out of his seat, which was at once occupied by a tired lounger, who had been watching all the afternoon for some opportunity of the kind. Mingling with the crowd, Richard Wilton took up his station near the main door opening out of the court-room and awaited developments.

The audience was beginning to manifest strong signs of disapproval, when a new ripple of interest broke over them as the tall form of Mark Winthrop was seen entering, bearing under his arm a tin box. Way was made for him by officious constables, as without any consultation or questioning Colonel Mansfield asked that the Reverend Mark Winthrop be called to the witness-stand. The latter advanced to his place, still holding the box, was sworn in due form, and asked to tell what he knew of the case.

He deposed that late upon the night of the fire and attack upon Richard Wilton's house he was engaged in his chapel, and upon leaving it, had stumbled over a tin box, the same he now held in his hands. Supposing that some one had deposited it there for safe-keeping, and fearing that it was in danger of being picked up by one to whom it did not belong, he put it away in his private room, expecting that on the next day at the latest its owner would make his loss known and he might then

restore it. The incident had passed out of his mind, and he had been away from the city on business, so that it was not until his return a few hours before that he had learned of what importance his testimony and the production of the box might be. He had at once despatched a note to the court-room, and procured the box. This was his story.

Was this the box Wilton had lost? That was the first question, and all eyes were turned to the chair which Wilton had occupied. The present incumbent of the seat tried to look bashful under the fire of surprise and wonder that greeted him from every face, but calls for Mr. Wilton were unanswered. He was not in the room.

The amazement of all was intense. The district attorney frowned fiercely, the judge glowered impatiently, and wonder was in the minds of all. Colonel Mansfield was the first to recover from the general stupefaction, and, taking the box from Mr. Winthrop, called the attention of the jury to the fact that it exactly bore out the description of the stolen article as described by Mr. Wilton in the beginning of the trial. He read from the notes of evidence to such purpose that no doubt was felt upon this important point. The lost box was before them. It was clear now that the prisoner was not guilty of secreting the stolen property. Mark Winthrop had sworn quite positively that the box must have remained where he put it on the night of the fire. The district attorney urged that the prisoner might have stolen it nevertheless (as Wilton had testified), and placed it in

the church porch expecting to go back after it. But this was triumphantly refuted by Colonel Mansfield in his closing speech for the prisoner, when he quoted the previous sworn testimony of both prosecution and defence, to the effect that John Sherwood was positively at or in the house of Wilton all of the time which must have been consumed in the theft and subsequent hiding of the box, at a point full half a mile away from the place of its occurrence.

There was little more to be said. The tide had completely turned in John's favor, and the jury acquitted him without leaving the box. The crowd cheered and began to melt away.

"The counsel and Mr. Sherwood will please come to my room," said the judge, rising to lead the way, having adjourned the court. "Mr. Worthington, you will come also, and Mr. Wilton, if he be in the room."

But Mr. Wilton was not within sound of the judge's voice. Perhaps the oppressive heaviness of the ill-smelling, badly-ventilated court-room had overcome him.

A moment before his hopes had been so high, to have them dashed all in a moment to the ground. For the discovery of the box he felt meant his own betrayal. To see, as he thought, his wealth melt away all in a moment; to fancy himself a byword and reproach among men as the robber of widow and orphan; to realize that he was a beggar, a wanderer,—all but a convict,—it came over him in a sickening rush, a choking sense of

humiliation and defeat. The animal instinct of fear and fright conquered him the moment he saw Mark Winthrop enter with the box in his custody. Unobserved in the general excitement, he pushed his way out the door. Once out in the air, he walked on down to the brink of the river, turned up the shore road, and left the city rapidly behind him. Thinking, thinking, always thinking. Hearing again for the thousandth time the solemn trust committed to him under the silent stars, among the sleeping forms, far away in the prison stockade. Over his shoulder he cast his eyes at the lights of the city, which now began to twinkle in the early twilight, but a dead face was close to his, sad and accusing eyes were staring at him from that grave of the past.

On he went, tireless, until the winter moon came out and threw a short shadow before him. Thinking he was, still. Not a touch of remorse, not a feeling of regret, save for discovery. A burning hatred of John Sherwood, a curse on his own stupidity in not destroying the only possible witness of sin. And even in that moment a wild, mad longing and yearning to clasp Margaret Lane to his heart, and go away with her alone,—far from the city, far from Tradelawn Mills, far from men, only to have her, and to know that she was his. There was a spark of good in this animal after all. Perhaps in the immortalities, the dream of which brought rest to the pain of Philip Worthington, there will be a revelation to such as Richard Wilton, and in the bright illumina-

tion of the Father's face he, too, may learn something more than his earth environment held for him.

Very far from such a point was he now, however. Suddenly he stopped short in his blind rush away from men, and pulled himself up snarling, raging at his own stupidity. A new fear came upon him as he turned about, and fiercely, at top speed, ran back over the track he had just traversed. The box was found, but in such hands as those of Mark Winthrop's it would not have been opened. It could not have been opened without breaking the lock; for it fastened with a spring catch, and Wilton remembered to have seen the robber dash the cover shut in the moment of making off with it.

Fool! fool! that he was. To have lost so much precious time, to have run so much added risk! He was not bound to show the contents of his box. Even now he might have had it safely in his possession. Fool! fool! He swore frightfully as he plunged on, till, reaching the outskirts of the city, he hailed a hack, and was driven swiftly to the court-house. Too late there. The grim building was all dark and silent. Then madly away to the residence of Judge Otis. The judge, called into the library from his dinner-table, eyed the haggard and anxious-looking man curiously.

In his advancing days of prosperity Wilton had prided himself, in a certain way, on his appearance. But there were no signs of care, or the usual swing of self-complacency, as he excused himself to the judge for hurry-

ing out of court on the plea of a bad headache, close air, and all that, and asked excitedly for his box.

The judge was a scion of one of the old families. He did not like factories, and barely tolerated those of his own friends who succumbed to the dividend-producing mania and became presidents of companies. Richard Wilton he neither liked nor respected. Just now he despised the coarse, vulgar-looking man, who talked more like a suppliant than a moneyed man asserting his rights. Moreover, the judge was in the possession of suspicions, which caused him to look with still less favor on Richard Wilton. Therefore he dismissed him very curtly, with the information that the box was in the possession of the Reverend Mark Winthrop, who was ready to account to its owner for its recovery. Then, having said so much, he stood up meaningly, and looked at his watch, remarking that it was a cold night. Wilton, anxious to get away from the contemptuous regard of this ornament of the bench, and longing to behold his box, needed no further hint, but picked up his hat and stepped quickly out into the night again, ordering the hackman, with a fierce curse, to drive to Winthrop's hotel as quick as the d—d old carrion would take him. The driver very properly resented any such appellation to his horses, and took a noble revenge on his fare by jolting him in every hole, and bumping him over every rough bit of pavement, that lay between the residence of Judge Otis and the hotel.

Wilton was the too miserable victim of his fears and

misgivings to notice these polite attentions on the part of his jehu, so the latter may be said to have had his labor for his pain, save for the sweet satisfaction that flooded his own soul at every particularly rough and bumpy motion of the vehicle.

As Richard Wilton crossed the hotel corridor to ask the number of Winthrop's room, a hand was laid upon his shoulder. A chill struck him, and he turned with a hunted look, his yellow teeth showing viciously. But it was only the jolly face of Jack Kincaid.

"Congratulate you, Wilton, on the box," cried he, loudly. "Queer find of Winthrop's. I've been looking for you. Winthrop wants to turn your property over to its owner. He's tired of being receiver of stolen goods. Come along." And Jack bore Wilton off, or dragged him rather, for the suspicious nature of the man was aroused again. He could not throw off the feeling of deadly fear that had clung to him ever since the night of the fire. For three weeks he had been looking over his shoulder in a desperate way, seeing always the dead face and the hollow eyes, that looked at him with stern and threatening reproach. He could not shake the feeling off. His one steady resort had been the brandy-bottle. He was under a spell. Try as he might it wound about him, and pressed the memories of the past like burning needles into his eyes, heart, brain. As Kincaid bore him along the hall-way now, there was the insane thought of flight in his mind. He could have dashed his fist in the face of this jolly,

loud-talking young fellow, and fled out into the night again.

"Here we are!" cried Jack.

With a mighty effort Richard Wilton gathered himself together, composed his face as best he could, straightened with a quick movement the disorder of his clothes, and entered the door defiantly and with head in the air. He was himself again. The sense of being hunted was lost in being brought to bay. Everything might now depend upon his calmness. And after all, what had he to fear? No one knew, no one could know, the secret of the box. He would claim his property and walk back to his own hotel. Once there, the tell-tale papers would meet with a swift destruction, though a thousand ghosts from Andersonville clutched at them with skinny fingers, and a voice of thunder from a thousand graves bade him forbear.

So Richard Wilton entered Mark Winthrop's room, and Mr. Jack Kincaid following him, closed the door, and softly turned the key.

CHAPTER XIX.

A VOICE FROM THE DEAD.

MEANWHILE, events had been breeding very fast. Two days before the trial, Robert Croft had called at Winthrop's hotel to find that the clergyman was out of town and would not be back until the next day but one. This was a crushing blow to Croft. He had brooded much over the box he had taken from Wilton's library. There had been a fierce struggle in his mind as to what he should do. He was once more on his feet, with a good situation. His family life was a gladness to him. The future, for the first time in years, seemed bright and hopeful, save as it was tinged by the dark stain of that one night's mad work.

Of course he knew that Sherwood was to be tried for the theft of the box. If it came to the point of John's conviction or his own confession, his course was very clear. He would give himself up, tell his story, and trust to events. But from this course he shrank until it became absolutely necessary to save an innocent man. If the box could be restored to Wilton, with no revelation as to the author of its abstraction, John's skirts would be cleared and no harm done. It did seem very hard to Croft, who it must be remembered had no refined sense of

right and wrong, that this one unintentional crime should keep him on the judgment-seat. He never shrank from the thought that ultimately justice both to Wilton and to Sherwood must be done at all hazards. To the one his property must be restored, to the other his reputation.

But Croft thought long and anxiously whether this could not be done without breaking up again the home that seemed so sweet to him after long years of drinking at the waters of Marah. Finally he determined to take Winthrop wholly into his confidence. It seemed to him that the young clergyman would judge of the matter fairly and clearly. He felt that he could trust in both Mark's honor and judgment. So after these many weary battles with himself, tired as he was with the struggle, he was beyond measure discouraged to find his last prop gone. It seemed like Nemesis. It was not right that he should escape the punishment of his sin. The discipline of sorrow was still necessary for him, but so hard it seemed,—so very, very hard.

"Mr. Winthrop will be back upon the fifteenth," said the clerk, airily, "but not before." The fifteenth was John's day of fate.

"What time do you think in the day?" queried Croft, eagerly, catching at this straw as a last resort.

"Impossible to tell. Maybe noon, maybe midnight." And the clerk, having disposed of this importunate man in shabby clothes, turned with mild condescension to discuss a great game of poker with a smartly

dressed young blood of the first society, who was proud and happy to be engaged in conversation with so magnificent a personage.

Croft turned away in a disheartened mood, and was very silent that night, which Mrs. Croft laid to the debts that were burdening him. Very many tender and gentle things in act and speech did she do and say. It seemed like the old days over again,—the old days when love had not calloused to indifference, and regrets had not sown the endless harvest of reproach. The two days that intervened were days of torture to Croft. One moment he found himself before the office door of John's lawyer; another, late at night, he made his way to the dark door-way under the luminous cross, and felt about vaguely in the thick blackness. He was on the verge of insanity during some of these hours. An almost undiscernible boundary-line is there, between the brain under control and the brain run wild. Croft hovered on the unknown borders those two days, and tasted the bitterness of death.

On the morning of the trial he hung on the rear of the throng that crowded the court-house, and heard enough to know that the case would last all that day, and perhaps run on into the next. So half a dozen times he went to and fro between the hall of justice and the hotel, asking the monotonous question over and over again, to the exasperation of the gentlemanly and accomplished clerk. Finally, late in the afternoon, Croft entered the office again, wearily, and for the last time.

The pressure was too heavy for him, and he was about to give himself up and tell his story.

The clerk saw him and called out, "Mr. Winthrop's back, and be hanged to you! Room 237, two flights up, in the corner."

There was no officious porter or bell-boy detailed to show Croft the way, nor did he miss the attention. Hurried, nervous, strained to the last notch of human endurance, he found himself in Mark's presence, and pouring out his story, so hungry for a listening ear, so sick and tired of his burden.

For a clergyman, Mark was a very practical fellow. He asked no more than the necessary questions, and hastily dashed off a note to Phil Worthington, sending it at once with all speed, and promising to follow at once with the box.

Then Winthrop sallied forth, Croft by his side still talking, relieving his sore heart, begging for direction, ready to be commanded this way or that as the friend he trusted should decide. They made their way to the chapel, and Winthrop found the box, which had passed entirely out of his mind.

"Never mind your coming, Robert," he said, kindly. "There will be no need. I found this box in the doorway on the night of the fire, and forgot all about it until to-day. The inference will be that one of the rioters having taken it, grew afraid of keeping it and dropped it where it was picked up by me. It will be simple enough. No question can be asked that I cannot satis-

factorily answer. You have suffered enough, my poor fellow. Do not let this worry you an atom. You made a mistake, of course; who under heaven does not? If any good could be done, any wrong righted, or justice satisfied, by telling all this you have told me, I would be the very last to advise withholding it. I may be wrong, of course,—but both as a man and a clergyman I think more harm than good would be accomplished by your confession. Let the secret be between us. It will teach you, perhaps,"—the young man grew very grave and solemn,—"that lesson we all need to learn more than any other, I think,—the lesson of toleration. If we are to take all men's acts literally for what they seem, God help us as well as them. No, Robert, do you go home, and leave this precious box with me."

Here the two men separated, and Croft went home with a warmer glow in his heart than he had known since he clasped the baby Ellen to his heart and snatched her from the midst of a shame that he would not see.

Winthrop hurried away to the court-house, where what occurred has already been related, and presently, in the private room of Judge Otis, a group was gathered looking with some interest at the old-fashioned, battered tin box, which stood on a desk in the middle of the room—waiting for Wilton to come and claim his property. But Wilton was nowhere to be found, and as the deputy sheriff came in with this information (the same officer of the law with whom John associated a bright

face and a tender voice), glances of surprise were interchanged.

Mark explained his connection with the box to the satisfaction of all, lawyers included, and it was committed to his safe-keeping by the judge, who was impatient to get home to dinner. Not so much for the dinner itself, which the judge counted as vain and useless, a sort of ornamental, and to some people possibly useful, preliminary to black coffee and cigars.

In the midst of the chatter of voices,—the district attorney and the counsel for the defence restraining that just and noble professional animosity which animated their respective thoughts of each other,—congratulations being offered to John upon his acquittal from what might have been a troublesome charge, he stood gazing absently at the cause of all these woes, when suddenly he started to the desk excitedly, caught up the box, and with a quick exclamation of surprise called Worthington's attention to the scarcely legible characters of a name and date which had once been painted on the cover in the early days of its usefulness. The letters were so faint that nothing but an accidental side light thrown upon the box, and the oblique view which John's position commanded, ever enabled him to see the almost obliterated inscription,—

JAMES LANE, 1859.

"Margaret's father!" cried Margaret's lover. "How came that box in Wilton's possession?"

How indeed!

The judge looked bored, remembering his dinner, and pulling out his chronometer to jog the memory of these people, who were painfully oblivious of the joys of coffee and a Reina Victoria.

The two lawyers, scenting prey perhaps, examined the box carefully with interest, and decided that Mr. Sherwood had read the inscription aright. Winthrop and Worthington rose in sympathetic interest to the pitch of John's excitement, and decided that Wilton must be found at once.

Kincaid, who had been attending the trial in his professional capacity, and out of friendly interest for Sherwood had followed the others into the room, volunteered to go in search of the missing man, arming himself with a warrant for his arrest on the charge of perjury.

Mark and John, bearing the now mysterious box with them, called a cab, and hurried to the residence of Tom Street, when the Widow Lane and Margaret were summoned to the little parlor, having learned long since from the faithful Tom that something had turned up in John's favor, and that he was a free man, without a taint of suspicion clinging to his name.

The Widow Lane was now an ardent admirer of her daughter's lover, although an undercurrent of fondness for the luxury of Richard Wilton's house still troubled at times her quiet moments.

Margaret came in with her mother, going up quietly to John, and put her hand in his, "I told you, dear!"

This with the sweet and serious look that always rested in the blue eyes, and John's heart bounded at the sound and the sight.

Then Margaret turned and welcomed Winthrop. "Why, Margaret dear, where *did* you bring your poor papa's cash-box from?" The faded eyes had been caught by a familiar object on the table, where Winthrop had placed it, hoping for some such recognition.

"I, mamma? I have never seen it before. Why, what is it? Papa's? How did it get here? What does it mean?" Looking with startled eyes from John to her mother, and always back to John again.

John stood close beside Margaret, and was about to speak, when Winthrop hushed him with a warning gesture, and pointed to the widow.

What had come over her?

She went to the table, and passed her hand lightly over the box, seeing to read the inscription easily that had only been accidentally discovered by unfamiliar eyes.

JAMES LANE, 1859.

"Oh, James dear, I remember now! My James dear, how did I forget it so long,—so long?"

She fumbled at the bosom of her dress, and presently drew out a worn bit of cord to which was attached a slender, delicate key, which she applied to the lock of the box, and it opened. The far-off look in the woman's eyes was touching. The worn face was beautiful with the glow of its precious memory.

"Oh, James dear, how could I have forgotten,—so long, so very long?"

The fingers seemed to wander aimlessly along the bottom of the box, turning over the stained and soiled papers, done up in the discolored tape that had once been red. But it was with no aimless purpose that she acted, for now a spring was touched, and from a little shallow secret pocket in the bottom of the box the widow drew out quite as though she had expected it, and with no surprise, an envelope. Her eyes were full now of unshed tears as she handed the packet to Margaret.

"Read it, dear. Your papa little thought that I would wait so long, when he told me if he did not come back from the war to look here for his last message. He died"—a choking sob stopped her utterance—"and I have waited so long. But you will read it, dear, —you will read it,—he will be glad to know that. Read it aloud."

"Do you break the seal, mamma," whispered the girl, shrinking from touching the signet of the dead, and the widow mechanically did so. The wax, brittle with its long repose, crumbled readily, and Margaret took from her mother's hand the message of the dead father, whom she but dimly remembered as a part of the past,—so long ago that past, it seemed connected with another life.

The letter had been written in Washington, as James Lane's company was ordered to the front. It was the

letter of a man who felt the shadow of his impending fate heavy upon him. He had never been much of a success this man, as men count success. Bright and full enough of genius, he lacked the tact and experience that alone could use these to advantage. For machinery he had a passion, and was always contriving little odds and ends, too trifling he thought to be worth the trouble and expense of a patent. Two or three improvements in the spinning-machines of the mills in which he was a room superintendent seemed worth his while to attempt, and patiently, at odd times, he had worked upon them. He knew that if once in shape and applied, they would be of inestimable value, and could he but get them introduced, his fortune would be made.

Not that James Lane cared for a fortune. His wife and baby were his treasures, and beyond the home circle he rarely looked for occupation or amusement. Sometimes he allowed himself to think that a little more responsiveness on the part of his wife would be helpful, —a little less adoration and more practical appreciation; but he was loyal, and had taken the better and worse clause of the marriage service quite literally.

The war broke out just as he had completed his plans for the improved machinery. Binding his papers together into the little cash-box, he gathered a company of men and went forthwith to Washington, thinking in a desultory way that something might turn up for his patents in that busy active hive. The department was there, at all events, where he must needs apply; so

with his box of precious papers in his little trunk, Captain James Lane marched his company of brave fellows through Main Street down to the railway station, one fine morning in June, 1861, waving their bright flag proudly, beating the new drums boldly. To how many in those days did the horrible fact of war seem like a holiday game as they went out, knowing nothing of its reality!

Before he went he told his wife of the secret of the box, and warned her if anything happened to him she would find inside directions what to do, with the plans and papers it contained. She wept and sobbed, and kissed her dear James, and never saw him again. To-night, as Margaret read this message from him, the widow was living over again in her still tender heart the scene of that morning when he went out of her life, went out never to return.

The letter was a careful and minute explanation of his plans, but more especially of what steps were necessary to put them into operation. After plainly outlining every point, and clearing away every difficulty that might arise, the letter continued:

"And now, my love, to-morrow we are ordered to the front. Who can tell what the chances of war may be? I may come back to tear this letter up. You may be reading it now, while I am lying dead away off, where you cannot be near me, and where the music of my baby's laugh I cannot hear. God knows, and he knows

best. These improvements I have written of will lift you above want,—you and baby,—and make you as happy as money can. This I know will not be another disappointment. You will have but to show the plans to any manufacturer to have their value at once seen. So far, I go out to battle with a light heart. I leave you provided for. I feel strangely to-night, dear. They tell us that evil, sometimes, casts a long shadow before it. I may never come back with my company. If so, it will be well. Were it not well, it would not be. Save for the pain it will leave in the hearts of a few dear ones, I could welcome death gladly enough. I do not fear it. Death under any circumstances almost can be seen as a relief. I can conceive that. Death on the battle-field, fighting for duty and principle under the bright beauty of the old flag, that death will make thousands of men, who are to-night mere human brutes, real martyrs, with a touch of glory on their hard faces. Why should it not be welcomed, then, by a man who had tried in his humble way to serve God and to love his neighbor as himself?

"Good-night, dear, and perhaps good-by. A kiss for my baby, a kiss for yourself. Good-night, good-by.

"Affectionately, lovingly, your husband,

"JAMES LANE."

How strange it seemed in the plain little room, with the staring clock ticking off the precious moments of life in its vulgar little way! the hushed room it was, as

Margaret, weeping, handed back the letter to the widow, who wiped away her own tears quite cheerfully and put the paper back in its place, closing and locking the box at the same time, and hiding the key away again, where it had lain all these years, waiting for this moment to start forth and release the buried voice of the dead soldier.

"We must see about these plans, must we not, Mr. Sherwood?" said the widow, simply. "James was always a bit enthusiastic you know, always on the brink of making a fortune for us,—perhaps it is better he should have gone away. He had a tender heart, my dear James, a disappointment some time,—maybe this one would have broken it."

Winthrop could not wait. Leaving the box behind him, and Sherwood to make all necessary explanations, he hurried to the hotel to confront Richard Wilton, if that worthy were to be found, with the evidences of his treachery.

As Wilton entered the room he saw quickly there were present besides its regular occupant and Philip Worthington, who had been hastily summoned, a quiet-looking man with sharp eyes and a bland expression of countenance, who might have been the lay delegate of a church convention or something of the sort, and was occupied in perusing with interest the columns of the *Evening Herald.*

"You have my property I'm told. It seems a dashed queer thing that you should have known it so long and

not given it back to me. That'd look pretty bad in any 'un but a parson."

The coarseness of the man jarred upon all present, even the quiet delegate, who shifted his leg to the other knee and continued to read the paper.

"*Your* property?" said Winthrop, quietly, but with a peculiar intonation at which Wilton took immediate alarm.

"Yes! *my* property. It's my box I suppose; *stolen* from me, too," with a disagreeable emphasis and look at the clergyman. "I c'n describe it if that's all. It's an old, worn tin thing, with a spring-lock, and used to be painted black, japanned-like. It had a brass handle on the top."

Oh, yes, Richard Wilton knew that box well enough to describe it perfectly.

"Any name on it?" queried Worthington.

"Name? No! What're you got to do about it, any way?" cried Wilton, savagely, losing his temper and prudence. "What're you all got to say? Give me my property, young man, an' double quick too, or I'll make it warm for you, parson or no parson, that's all. You've interfered enough in my affairs. D'ye hear? I want my box," fiercely threatening the clergyman with angry face and small eyes snapping.

"There is no need for such demonstration, Mr. Wilton," calmly returned Mark. "I have just one question to ask, and then you will be allowed to claim your own."

Again the hunted look came into Wilton's eyes, and

he glanced despairingly over his shoulder,—to meet again the dead face and the accusing look.

"Well," he said, sullenly, "ask and be d—d."

"What message did Captain Lane send to his wife by you?"

Wilton never moved a muscle. The others scanned his face to read some sign of fear or baffled rage, some proof that he felt the struggle over and himself beaten. But not a line of the face changed, the very eyelids seemed motionless. He stared at Winthrop but saw him not.

"What message did Captain Lane send to his wife by you?"

Into Richard Wilton's heart every word of that question dropped like lumps of ice, chilling and freezing his very marrow.

The message—he tried to recall it, and it came to him:

"I am going to trust you with a secret. It is the secret of a dying man, which from the very grave I tell you, in trust for my helpless wife and baby."

"You have not answered me, Mr. Wilton," said Mark. "It may seem a strange question, but it is really a vital one."

He paused for a reply.

Wilton moved now, stealthily, so that only the stolid man reading the evening paper noticed any movement at all. Then with a curse flung from livid lips he dashed at Mark. The latter did not need to use the

guard he threw up at once, as a reminiscence of the old boxing days in college, for the stolid man had left the perusal of his newspaper quite as suddenly as Wilton had changed his position, and the latter found himself with handcuffs gripped about his wrists, and the stolid man, breathing a little quickly from his exertion, was thoughtfully asking him if the irons were comfortable. For the stolid man was not a lay delegate, but a detective policeman.

Wilton's rage was frightful. Now that the game was up, the natural man came out in his true colors. One moment he cursed so wickedly that even Jack Kincaid thought he was drawing it a trifle strong, and the officer advised him confidentially to "shut up," doubtless out of regard for Mark's clerical garb. The next moment he was on his knees abjectly before Winthrop, acknowledging everything,—offering to give up everything. Anything but the shame of public exposure and imprisonment. Let him see the Widow Lane. He could explain to her. He had not meant to always take advantage of this wealth that belonged to her. He would have restored it some day.

"Oh, of course," scornfully said the detective, who could both understand and respect profanity, but was deeply disgusted at this whining penitence.

Mark spoke kindly to Wilton then.

"The law must take its course now, Mr. Wilton. But I am sure that neither the widow nor Margaret will willingly harm you, although you have wronged them

so long. You are not under arrest for that matter at all, but on the charge of perjury for falsely testifying that you saw John Sherwood take the box from your room. It was necessary to have some legal hold upon you to force you to a restitution had you not confessed what you have."

"But I thought I saw him take it, I'm sure I thought so," whined the wretched creature. "I may've been wrong, there were so many in the room. I saw his face sure an' thought he was the one. Don't you think I'd a good right to?"

"Perhaps so. But you will have time to consider your defence on that charge. What you must do now is to go with us before a notary public and make a deposition as to the true ownership of the patents upon which you have been coining money since the war. A full and complete restitution of every penny will be required of you. This is the least you can do in reparation for the great wrong you have done the wife and daughter of your old captain. Are you ready?"

"But it'll ruin me. I've spent a deal o' money. It'll take the hull Tradelawn property. Let me see the widow. She don't hate me; she'll understand. I've meant well by her; I've paid out lots o' money for her. That shows I didn't mean to harm *her*. I can *talk* to the widow y' know. Don't ruin me."

"Ruin *you!*" said Jack, and the emphasis was far from consolatory.

"There must be no further trifling, Wilton," broke

in Worthington at this point. "Either make the statement as Mr. Winthrop tells you, or stand a trial that may send you to prison for the remainder of your life. Come, decide!"

Wilton cowered. The fates were against him. He went along with the men humbly enough, begging only that the handcuffs might be removed. He pleaded so hard that Mark added his own entreaties, and the officer, much against his will, took off the irons, but with a significant motion towards the handle of his revolver, as he dropped a quiet hint that it would not be particularly healthy to attempt an escape.

It was very late before the deposition was written out, signed, sealed, and sworn to. Then Wilton went with his attendant to the common jail, where, in consideration of the fact that he had once been mayor of the city, he was allowed a cell to himself. In the next one to him was confined one Job Waters, on a charge of being drunk and disorderly.

Winthrop took charge of the deposition, and walked a very long way out of his direct road home to accompany Phil Worthington to his door. Perhaps Sydney, safe and sleeping in her dainty bed, heard the well-known voice, and smiled through her dreams.

CHAPTER XX.

MARGARET AND JOHN.

THE little company we left together in the parlor of the Street household, enlarged by the presence of the genial Tom himself and his sympathetic wife, sat very late that evening, while Sherwood told the story to them all and explained what it meant. If it were possible for so pronounced a passion as hate to occupy the feeble mind of the Widow Lane, she felt it then. Not for herself, not for her daughter, but for the base betrayal of the dead soldier's trust. Richard Wilton would have found small consolation in the appeal he prayed to be allowed to make to the woman he had so long and easily deluded. When she came to realize that Wilton's great wealth in reality belonged to herself and her daughter; when Sherwood explained in tones that seemed scarcely interested enough to the quick listening ears of Margaret that they were virtually the owners of the Tradelawn Mills, that Margaret was the heiress of a great sum of money, the widow was entirely overwhelmed. As to Wilton, let him go, she said, generously, when Tom hinted that he would gladly take a day off work to see Richard Wilton breaking stone in uniform. Margaret's voice was on the side of mercy, too.

"Let him go, poor thing; he will suffer enough. It was too great a temptation for so small a heart and mind. Let him go!"

Later, Margaret and John were considerately left alone. They were together at last, but there was some invisible bar between them. Always, heretofore, there had been no question but that John should be close to Margaret, and Margaret close to John. He would take the initiative, and she thought it no shame of her love to meet him half-way.

Now John sat down in a chair on one side of the fire-place, and Margaret shrank into one opposite.

"John!"

"Yes, Margaret."

The words were the words of John, but the voice was the voice of a stranger.

"Are you glad for us, John?"

"Glad! oh, yes. It will be a very great thing for you, Margaret. You will shine now where you ought to have been long ago. You will be loved, and made much of. Oh, yes, I am very glad."

"Loved by whom, John?"

"Why—by every one. No one can help loving you, Margaret. Now that you will go into society, and meet great people and celebrated people, your life will be very different from what it has been, you know. There will be so much more to occupy your mind and—and your heart. You will give up the school?"

"Yes, John."

"You will do so much with this money, Margaret; you know what the people need. Oh, it will be a great thing to have the power of helping, as you will have it, —a very great thing!"

Margaret said never a word, but her face slipped down to the protection of her hand, and the little tears began to trickle, which John never saw at all, for he was looking straight into the fire. He was sensitively and absurdly proud, this John Sherwood. With Margaret poor and dependent upon his strong arm, he had been the happiest of happy lovers. Suddenly this great golden cloud of wealth fell from the skies, and John felt that it had fallen between them. How could he ask Margaret Lane to marry him now? His heart bled to think of the renunciation, but how could he? Margaret Lane, the widow's daughter, keeping a little school, and laying up her modest wardrobe-money against the day when, hand in hand, they would walk out of church together as man and wife,—this was one thing. Margaret Lane, the heiress of money and mills and houses, the belle of society, the courted of great people,—this was quite another thing.

He would have ennobled his life by taking into it one who came with only the sacred treasure of herself. He ached in his heart to feel that he would be degraded in his own eyes,—to marry the heiress of great wealth.

But how to broach it to her? How to tell this pure, simple, young thing that he was in honor bound to

give her back to herself? How indeed, when his heart was breaking at the thought of it?

"Margaret." His voice trembled in spite of himself.

"Yes, John." Her voice was low and tremulous too, and the face was still hidden.

"This changes so many things, does it not?"

"The money, John?"

"Yes, Margaret, the money."

"John!" He caught quickly the slight accent of appeal.

"John,—I would rather—rather have my—school."

"Why, Margaret?"

She noticed then that he had not called her "dear" once.

"Because—because I don't quite feel strong enough to take up this burden of wealth—alone."

"Your mother."

"Oh, yes; mother," wearily. "I had forgotten."

"But it is so much better for you every way, Margaret. You were born to be a queen, and you will be one now. Little snow-drop as you are, you can fight the battles of helpless people, and you will. Why, it is the very kindness of heaven to put in hands like yours the power of doing for others. Heaven does seem to make mistakes sometimes, but not just now at all events. Only, Margaret, you must think of the rest of us sometimes." This he tried to say lightly, and was quite aware what a dismal failure he made.

Was he slipping away from her thus? Was he calmly

determined to ignore the vows of which she remembered every dear, dear word,—the kisses she felt yet upon her lips? Was he to go away to-night because of this hateful money, and never come back to her again? Margaret hated that old cash-box with a fervent hatred. Freely and gladly, had it been in her power, would she have given it back, unopened, unexplored, with its records of plans and specifications, and all the detestable evidences that she was an heiress,—back to Richard Wilton even, with his cruel heart and mean nature,—if only with that restoration would come again the well-remembered undertone of tenderness in John's voice and the blessed words of endearment upon John's lips. And John could not see this. She knew what was the matter. She knew John so well, that the pride of his heart was evident to her quick perception. He did not wish to say in so many words, "I give you up, Margaret. I am ashamed to take you with all this wealth," but he wished it, and he was trying now, as delicately as he could, without jarring upon her womanhood, to let her see that he meant to bury his love for her.

How could she bear it, yet what could she do? There was no false pride about this fragile little woman. But there was a depth and reality of womanly delicacy that prevented her throwing herself at John's feet and begging him to raise her up again.

He ought to see. He ought to know. And yet as she stole a look at the set, firm face across the fire, she felt

that her love was taking wings before her very eyes,—and all through the despicable money.

"Well, Margaret, it is getting late. I must be going. Good-night!" And he took her hand as they both rose.

"Good-night, John." Would he kiss her, she wondered, as she lifted her face just far enough to assure him that the lips were still his, not far enough to invite the caress she longed for. "Once more, and for the last time," John thought to himself, not strong enough to endure the temptation, and he bent down, touching her lips.

With that still warm in her heart, Margaret seized his hands, standing proud and pale before him.

"John, I know what you are thinking. You cannot hide it from me. I will speak on now, though it shames me to do it; for you will not, out of the pride you ought not to have. Oh, John, how can you! how can you! I have loved you and trusted you to the uttermost. I do now; I always must. You may cast my love off, for whatever reason. You cannot throw it farther than your feet. There it will stay, pleading its wounds. With your nature you have entered my life, and became a part of it. You have known it for long. I have confessed it before, why not once more, now? When I was poor and helpless and insignificant, you held me in your arms,—to-night, with this miserable shadow of the money over me, you have not even called me 'dear.' I tell you, John, if *that* is all, I will give up every penny of this money. I will tell

mamma to take it and enjoy it as long as she lives, and then to give it away, throw it into the sea, do anything with it, only it shall not come between me and my love. Why, John,"—the face grew ineffably tender, and the blue eyes were downcast,—"I rejoiced for a little while when I first knew of this money,—rejoiced to think I could be of real use to you. Do you think a woman who loves cares for money or power, save as she can pour it out, consecrated by her love, at the feet of the man she worships? If I were a queen, what would be my greatest joy but to share my kingdom with you, and to abdicate it rather than not have you crowned king beside me. So now, this money. I will give it you with myself, happy to think that I have been the means of help and happiness and power to you, or I will give it up, oh! gladly give it up, to stay still by your side. Speak to me, John! Alas! if I have said too much; it seems as though I had not said enough."

She let his hand fall, and clasped her own before her, waiting, like a culprit, for sentence. An awful moment for her, and then she was folded close to the strong heart; tight, tight in the strong arms, and the kisses she longed for were showered upon her brow and lips, the words she had grown sick in waiting for were poured into her ears.

"Now, how silly of you, John! Confess, wasn't it?" cooed the happy girl at length, and John confessed at once that it was, and that he would never do so any more. And far from nobly declining to receive a penny

of Margaret's money, he was engaged very shortly in planning how the Tradelawn Mills could be turned into a model institution, where, as men, women, and children toiled, they, too, would gain in proportion with those who planned for them.

And Margaret listened, with a shining tenderness in her eyes and her face suffused with a happy light, thinking how great and wonderful a man this John of hers was, and what a tremendous work he was bound to do in the world.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE END, WHICH CONTAINS THE MORAL.

And now our story is ended. Ended in an altogether different way from the first intention of its author. It was to have been a story with a purpose. But love has come down upon it like an avalanche and buried out of sight the many serious moral principles which it was at first intended to illustrate. With two weddings on our hands, the affairs of two expectant couples demanding a finishing off in the proper realism of rings and embroidered clothes, how can one drive home a moral? Of course the story is ended. Mark and Sydney would like to inquire what more of importance there is to say. They may well take this high and mighty tone, having

occupied a whole valuable chapter to the exclusion of every one else. Margaret and John are quite certain there is nothing to add to this prosaic idyl of ours. Talk of love being generous, it is the most selfish of human passions,—divinely selfish. I might tell how Wilton walked out of jail early the next morning after his incarceration by the connivance of the jailer, whom in his days of prosperity the mill-owner had known as one of the boys about the ward. Gross carelessness the police commissioners called it in the jailer, and suspended him from pay and duty for three days, which he bore with great philosophy and resignation, fingering a fat roll of bills in his pocket,—a roll of bills which by right belonged to the Widow Lane, being dividends on the production of the Tradelawn Mills. So Richard Wilton fled from the life he had been living, and in his gross way enjoying. The sworn deposition he left behind cut off all hope of counteracting the effect of those telltale plans in the old cash-box. It was very shortly known that Wilton, the self-made man, the common fellow who had risen by the innate power of genius from the gutter to the palace,—it was very soon known that this late owner of the Tradelawn Mills had stolen the designs of Captain Lane, which had been intrusted to his safe-keeping, and had used them as his own. Had patented machinery and gathered great wealth, feeding upon the brains of the dead and fattening upon the credulity of the living. Society knew it all. The *Evening Herald* told this wise world nothing new when it exposed Wilton's

rascality and recorded his flight. Every one had known that something like it must be the case. You could read it in his face. Any baby could! Pshaw! Wilton a man of brains? He was far more stupid than many of his day-laborers. Any one could hark back without difficulty and discern the trail of a mean thing and a brutal thing. No one was at a loss for reminiscences that proved Wilton was a rascal, and had always been esteemed as such. Jack Kincaid threw a trifle of coldness over the generally warm outburst of indignation by referring to the fact that the much maligned Wilton had been triumphantly elected mayor of the city on the business men's ticket. But, in spite of the heavy majority he had received on that occasion, one would need to have searched far and wide now to discover business men who had voted for him.

So Richard Wilton disappeared. He was heard from the other day as being down at the heels in a Western city, cultivating with great diligence a noble disregard for the rights and privileges of private property. Surely he is finding his place. He has his uses, and such as he. That it wrenches one's imagination to discern the use is no argument against its certainty.

The Tradelawn Mills did not fall to pieces with the flight of their late owner. The Widow Lane, when she was put in legal possession of the property, promptly made John Sherwood her manager. And John Sherwood as promptly went to Philip Worthington with a proposition. Still another great mill was built. A

great store was put up, in which operatives and others who cared might procure anything the needs of life demanded, from pins and needles to flour, clothes, and books. It was all co-operation. Phil and Sydney put out their money in this and other schemes with a recklessness that astonished their friends. But it soon began to be whispered that there was no dissatisfaction among the Tradelawn people. No more mutterings and murmurings over the noon dinner-pail. It began to be noticed that the Tradelawn people were the best and choicest help in the city. They walked with a certain self-respect. They spoke proudly of our mills, and our store, and our prospects. What did it all mean? Could a year merely of changed ownership work such results? Very simple the answer, dearly beloved,—very simple. Every workman, workwoman, or workchild in the Tradelawn property was a stockholder in the Tradelawn business. They had their fair wages for fair work, but they had more. They knew that as trade prospered, as production was greater and better, and prices advanced, that they would benefit with the Widow Lane and the Worthingtons, who were fellow-stockholders. They did not have as much as the large owners of course, but they saw the perfect fairness of that. The share of Harney, the machinist, was not as large as that of Robert Croft, the under superintendent. But Robert Croft would work his head as well as his hands, and thus earn a double income. And Harney, the machinist, had the very great satisfaction of knowing that the in-

crease of wealth, to the production of which he was giving his best work, would be his in proportion to his faithfulness and ability. If any one will gather up and comprehend in one word the new feature of manufacturing life introduced by Sydney Worthington's inspiration, by the help of her friends, that word is hope. The element of hope, of the possibility and probability of better things, this it was that transferred the Tradelawn help into men and women, from having been dulled, embittered, and helpless slaves. Once during the strike Sydney had read with a flush of indignation the words of a great preacher in a neighboring city, the inference from which was that water cost nothing, very good bread could be procured for a large family at a dollar a day, and bread and water would support life. She did not believe that. She did not believe that man could live by bread and water alone. It might keep the body from falling apart. But the soul would as surely disintegrate as the bread does in the water, without the inspiration of a higher life than the life of merely holding together. Life without hope, without some element of joy, without a knowledge of external sympathy with its pain and sorrow. Does the eloquent preacher call that life? Perhaps he would have added tracts though as dessert. There is a great deal in tracts, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it sleeps in them, and never comes out for the help of those who read.

The Widow Lane came out surprisingly in her new

rôle. To hear her talk was delicious. Like a child she revelled in all the little and great luxuries with which Margaret and John saw she was surrounded. She forgot Wilton; she only remembered that all this ease and comfort was the bequest of the dead soldier. Weak as she had been, and little of self-assertion as she had, one strong idea clung to her, and gave her nor any one rest until it was carried out. She got at the munificent pension-list of the government, and selecting twenty-five of the least liberally provided for in her own neighborhood, trebled their annual stipend. Margaret smiled, and told John that this would be a good way to dispose of her fortune when he got very, very tired of managing it. John looked reproachful, and Margaret was sorry. The making-up followed of course, and the skies were sunny once more.

Robert Croft, as hinted, was put in a position of trust in the Tradelawn company. Mrs. Croft could ride in a carriage now without any serious invasion of their income, but she never wishes it. She holds Robert very closely to heart now, and in a hundred ways seeks to bridge over that weary, weary chasm of twenty years. When Ellen died, and the news came to them, they held each other long and silently, and Robert Croft made the only reference to the dark past that ever crossed his lips. "Ellen, our baby, has paid her ransom with her own body and her own blood. In one of the many mansions our baby waits." And the lonely couple took up the burden of life again. Yes, the baby waits, and watches.

Who will dare to say that she does not pray and counsel and help?

One morning at eleven o'clock there was a double wedding in St. Mary's Chapel. The bishop was there, straight and tall, and kindly-looking as ever,—the most familiar and beloved face in the State. Two couples stood before him, while the chapel was crowded to the foot of the chancel, and the windows were jammed with faces, many of them dull and rough and expressionless. One present came to Mark, as he sat late in his hotel room, an offering that touched him deeply. It was an ill-spelled line in a crumpled bit of soiled paper, and it had a dozen signatures in all varieties of imaginative and intuitional spelling. The line was literally,—

"god bless yer is the umble hope uv yours til death."

The tears stood in Mark's eyes to see in the list, only some of which he knew, one the name of a prostitute, the other the name of a thief.

Jack Kincaid and Tom Street were at the wedding of course; they found themselves together and talked naturally of the good fortune of their friends, especially the sudden accession to wealth of the humble widow and her lovely daughter.

"That's all very well though," whispered Tom, in the solemn hushed tone which people assume in church, when they ought either not talk at all, or speak out loud so as not to rasp the spiritual and physical nerves of their neighbors. "That's all very well, but the city

'll have something else to talk about before long. I speak modestly, you know, Mr. Kincaid, and do not wish to seem even to boast, but I tell you there will be a startling sensation in this community before very long that will cause Wilton's career to pale before it. What do you think, sir, of a great-aunt of my wife, on the brink of the grave, without a child to her name, and the possessor of a fortune so vast as to take away one's breath, all made in bitters? In bitters, sir. I can't say but that I'd rather have had money from any other source than from bottles of patent medicine; but, after all, I console myself with the thought that it's the use——"

Here the organ, from which low, sweet strains and harmonies had been breaking in ripples over the whispering crowd, swung into the Swedish Wedding March as the chapel-doors were flung wide; the bishop arose from his chair in the chancel, and four friends of ours unattended walked up the aisle. Mark Winthrop and Sydney Worthington, John Sherwood and Margaret Lane. The dresses are beyond my unadorned powers of description. Margaret would always be a snow-drop, as she was this sunny morning. Sydney would always be the superb, but the suffused glow of tenderness from her eyes to-day took away all the hauteur of which Mark was in secret rather proud than otherwise.

A wedding breakfast followed at the Worthingtons. We may be sure that Phil came out in great form, made ridiculous speeches, told such stories that the bishop

tried to look shocked and failed. Mrs. Sands only feared that some shadows might rest upon the company by the absence of her dear papa. But the subject was not brought up, and it was generally agreed that the bishop had tied the double knot very well considering his age and opportunities.

There were toasts: The Brides. The Grooms. The Church. Commerce. The Press. The Ladies in general (responded to with great form and magniloquence by Mr. Tom Street).

Then the carriages came, and the slippers were thrown. Sydney making the least bit of diversion as she was entering her carriage by running half a dozen steps in the endeavor to catch a sweet-faced little child who was wonderingly beholding the crowd from the edge of the sidewalk. She caught the child to her arms and kissed it, then stepped sedately to her place; the doors clanged, the drivers flourished their whips, and Phil Worthington went back to the crowded parlors, more lonely than ever.

The parable is ended. The story-teller leaves his readers, if he has any, to draw what moral they please. He assures them that his parable has a moral, as every problem must, whether solved or unsolved. If he has preached too much, dogmatized too often, made himself generally disagreeable, as though he assumed to himself a higher seat in the synagogue than his fellows, he begs pardon for each and every offence. He does not intend

to be a Pharisee, however pharisaically he may have written.

But he still insists upon his problems, even with wedding-bells ringing and toasts being responded to.

There is a trinity of problems which seem to be fast assuming the proportions and hideousness of a trinity of trouble for present and future generations of this republic to deal with. The problem of labor, the problem of poverty, the problem of wealth. They so touch upon and influence our intercourse with each other, that he is a foolish prophet who does not recognize the fact and allow for it.

If these problems are left to settle themselves by these comfortable people who lie back after dinner and say mildly "such things should not be," but feeling that they will not be disturbed by *them* at all events, let not such comfortable people take too great consolation out of their fancied security. Let them read the parable of Tom Allalone. Everything touches everybody in this world. Everything comes back upon us. Arbitrary punishment is not good law in this world or in any other, but retribution is. We may leave Labor to struggle on confusedly and blindly with ever-growing bitterness against wealth, but what when the day comes that Labor arises in the knowledge of its might? We may suffer Poverty to go on increasing, with no new effort to stay or prevent it but that maudlin and mistaken one of doing everything for the poor, without providing them the means at far less expense to do

for themselves. And not only far less expense to the benevolent people who head subscription-lists and make up deficiencies, but, what is more to the purpose, at far less expense to the self-respect and morality of these people, who cannot be scornfully turned off by the taunt of pauper. Poverty works upward as well as downward.

But is wealth a problem? Good heavens! what will this shallow prater be saying next?

Wealth a problem! greater than either of the others. Think of it. The wealth of a Christian people built upon the contributions of hollow-eyed men, sad-faced women, children made old before their time by toil. Is there no problem here? One would think that Dives must die a thousand deaths every year thinking of such a problem. Only Dives does not always know and does not always think.

At the risk of having the book closed here, I have just a little preachment to utter to Dives, viewing him not unkindly, not morosely, not enviously, but humanely.

If one prostitutes his talents, his brains, his genius, whatever the bent, every one is quick to cry out against this sacrilege. We say that the gifts of genius, be it of poet, artist, orator, or singer (who is the real interpreter of the others), are too precious a possession to be misused, or even to be unused. We rescue a voice from the gutter and give it training and culture, because it is a thing to be preserved for what it can add to the world's joy and the world's help. So also is wealth a

talent, good Dives, and those who possess it are as much stewards to be found faithful as those whose gifts lie in different directions. We have no right to let it lie unused in the napkin, or to waste it without adding to the Father's store. The fact that Dives has wealth is a divine message for him to use it for the benefit of all, just as the voice of Patti is a divine message to sing to the world; or the power of Booth or Irving a divine message to act to the world; or the tongue of Webster a divine message to speak to the world; or the pen of Dickens or George Eliot a divine message to write to the world.

Men and women not only may use such talents for profit, they *must* use them, if meanwhile they starve in a garret. So with wealth. It is a stewardship. It is a trust. It cannot be hoarded for the owners thereof save to their hurt. The profit of the earth is for all. I do not doubt that there are men and women of wealth, perhaps a majority of them, though this requires a trifle of charity to believe, whom, if they should come to see what they can do by means of co-operative production to relieve the misery of poverty, to solve the bitter problem of ill-compensated labor, and at the same time to solve the hard problem of their own stewardship, without debauching the morals or sapping the independence of the working classes, I do think they would take long strides towards bringing about such a happy solution of the problems that are assuming more and more portentous shape every day and every year.

I am aware, fully, that in many cases the stewards of wealth do not see or feel the horrible contrast pictured in their own case, and the misery of those by whose efforts they acquire ease. And when it is brought home to them, it is too often by the cunning demagogue who seeks but a temporary effect—and a consideration. For there is a deal of cant and unpardonable sentimentalism indulged in by the alleged advocates of the working-man. They make their points too often with little regard for the exact facts in the case, or with a carelessness of logic which exposes the fallacy of their arguments.

But the trinity of problems remain to be solved. They are in the crucible of our nineteenth century civilization. It still remains for men to decide whether they will be stirred to a solution by such hands as those of Sydney Worthington or of Job Waters the long-shoreman.

The cradle of that aristocracy which lingers yet in the old world to-day, in name though no longer in power, was on the battle-field or in the council-hall, where might of arm or coolness of brain gave patents of nobility. It was the fact that men were the heaven-born, heaven-anointed leaders that put them in the front rank. They were noble men indeed of old, who were the ancestors of noblemen,—a far different thing now. Now, shrink back from the acknowledgment as many may, and deny it as many will, wealth, and not necessarily the quick brain or sturdy arm, is the governing power of this present age. May we not long for,

and watch for, the illumination of these who hold this modern patent of nobility, that they may feel pressing upon them the force of the proud old motto, *noblesse oblige?*

When they do, the bitter cry of poverty will grow fainter in our ears; no longer will the sullen brow and raised arm of uncompensated labor threaten the order and peace of society; no longer will exist that sore evil which the wise man saw hundreds of years ago, "riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

In the increase of wealth and the increase of them that eat and drink, will be increased also the reward of them that toil, and the profit of the earth will be for all.

THE END.

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